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HUBERT HENRY DAVIES

CAPTAIN DREW ON LEAVE

BAKER'S LIBRARY EDITION

Walter H. Baker Company, Boston

Monograph

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— Season 1925 —

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Captain Drew on Leave

A Comedy in Four Acts

By

HUBERT HENRY DAVIES

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Captain Drew on Leave

CHARACTERS

(*As originally produced, October 24, 1912, at the New Theatre, London.*)

Captain Drew, R. N.	*Charles Wyndham.*
Mr. White	*Mr. A. Vane-Tempest.*
Mr. Hassell	*Mr. Eille Norwood.*
Mr. Moxon	*Mr. Louis Calvert.*

By Arrangement with Messrs. Vedrenne & Barker.

Maid	*Miss V. Salberg.*
Mrs. Moxon	*Miss Marion Terry.*
Miss Mills	*Miss Mary Moore.*

Acts I, II and IV. Mrs. Moxon's drawing-room. One month passes between Acts I and II. There is no interval of time between Acts II and III.

Act III. The studio in Mr. White's garden. A night passes between Acts III and IV.

The action takes place in a rural district of England, in summer time.

Period.—The present day.

JUN 24 1924

Captain Drew on Leave

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE.—MRS. MOXON'S *drawing-room. It is a pleasant room in a substantial country house. The furniture is good, but not new, and rather early Victorian in style. An open French window leads to the garden. The fireplace is filled with potted plants, with two armchairs either side of it. There is a round seat with places for three people to sit back to back. On a round table with a shelf under it reposes a stout leather photograph album, a vase of roses and two or three books. By the fireplace, there is a large round work-basket containing skeins of red wool. A large framed photograph of Queen Victoria is in a prominent place on the back wall.*

As the curtain rises enter CAPTAIN DREW, R. N., *and* ERNEST WHITE. DREW *is a breezy, high-spirited man about forty-five, rather weather-beaten in appearance and young in manner. He wears civilian dress.* WHITE

is rather younger. He has a good appearance; in manner he is fussy, and apt to be anxious.

DREW.

You never told me who these people are. Who is it that you've brought me to see?

WHITE.

The Moxons.

DREW.

Any daughters?

WHITE.

No. Just Mr. and Mrs. Moxon and their two little boys. They're nice, simple people—rather dull, but very kind.

DREW.

I told you to take me to see some girls.

WHITE.

Really, Hal—the way you go on about girls is hardly nice.

DREW.

If you'd been out of England months and months at a stretch and seen no one but your own ship's crew and the sort of people one meets in the South American ports, you'd un-

derstand what women mean to us when we come home. And it's a great chance for the girls. Even the plain ones pass for pretty—and the beauties—what angels the little devils look!

WHITE.

[*Looking toward the door and window uneasily to see if they are overheard.*] Do be careful.

DREW.

From your description of the Moxons I shan't need to hold myself in very hard.

WHITE.

[*Diffidently.*] There's a Miss Mills—a friend of theirs, such a fascinating girl.

DREW.

Then let us leave cards on the Moxons and go and call on Miss Mills.

WHITE.

But she's staying here.

DREW.

[*Delighted.*] Miss Mills is?

WHITE.

Yes. [*Smiling.*] She's so pretty.

DREW.

[*Smiling.*] Ah!

WHITE.

And quite an heiress.

DREW.

She'll do.

WHITE.

[*Looking uneasily at* DREW.] I didn't know *you* were thinking of getting married.

DREW.

I'm not.

WHITE.

Miss Mills, of course, is a lady.

DREW.

Just what I'm looking for; a woman who can appreciate the finer shades of love-making. [*Turning to the window and indicating the view from it.*] And in these woods and lanes of yours—what chances!

WHITE

[*Trying to be severe and shaking his head at* DREW.] Now, Hal, I can't introduce you here if you are going to begin any of your wickedness. I won't take the responsibility.

DREW.

[*Mocking* WHITE *good-humoredly by shaking his head at him.*] There won't be any responsibility. [*He pauses and smiles as he adds.*] My indiscretions are always discreet.

WHITE.

I shall warn Miss Mills.

DREW.

Are you her guardian?

WHITE.

[*Embarrassed.*] I can hardly call myself that—yet.

DREW.

Oh, I see. I won't spoil your game, of course. I renounce Miss Mills. It's hard to give her up so soon. But if you want her, I'll —— [*He pauses and says cheerfully.*] I'll make love to Mrs. Moxon. [WHITE *laughs.*] Why not?

WHITE.

Wait till you see her.

DREW.

Is she such a fright?

WHITE.

Oh, no. She's a very nice woman, and not at all bad looking.

DREW.

Then I see no reason against it.

WHITE.

She's not the kind of woman that even a sailor would think of making love to.

DREW.

I admit no such kind.

WHITE.

She's so proper.

DREW.

Oh, but I could tell you the most surprising cases. [*He glances quickly at the door and window, moves nearer to* WHITE, *and lowers his voice a little.*] I once met a missionary on her way to Japan ——

WHITE.

[*Interrupting him.*] Yes, yes. I know that story. [*As* DREW *moves away, smiling to himself,* WHITE *continues.*] But with Mrs. Moxon it's not only that she is so straight-laced. It's her nature. She never thinks about men—in that way.

DREW.

[*Turning to* WHITE.] How do you know what way she thinks about them?

WHITE.

You can always tell a woman by the way she walks and talks and looks at you, and by the kind of clothes she wears. Mrs. Moxon's dresses look as if she chose them solely for their durability.

DREW.

And a very good thing to choose them for.

WHITE.

She fastens her hat on with elastic.

DREW.

Much better than those long beastly hatpins. I nearly had my eye put out in Portsmouth.

WHITE.

Anyhow, it's no use trying to make an impression on Mrs. Moxon—because you can't.

DREW.

[*Annoyed.*] Don't tell me I can't. It annoys me to be told I can't do things. You think a woman isn't a woman unless she's a pretty girl, like that insipid little what's-her-name—the heiress.

WHITE.

[*Indignantly.*] Oh—you've no right to run down Miss Mills in that way.

DREW.

You ran down my Mrs. Moxon.

WHITE.

I didn't. I only told you the kind of woman she is, and even if she wasn't—you are not at all the kind of man she'd approve of.

DREW.

Is it your experience that women invariably fall in love with the men they approve of?

WHITE.

You seem very sure of a conquest.

DREW.

You think that's vanity. It's not. It's science. Any man can make any woman fall in love with him, provided she is not in love with some one else. It's only a question of using the right method. Most men have only one method for all women. They go bungling along with a vague idea that women are all alike. Why, you might as well say that the cat tribe contains only the ordinary household cat. You must classify your woman before

you go ahead—flirt, prude, sentimentalist, hysteric, and so on. If you do it carefully—you never need get scratched.

WHITE.

You know there's a Mr. Moxon?

DREW.

Oh, yes. What sort of fellow is Moxon?

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. MOXON. MOXON *enters first. He is a large man about forty, rather dull and heavy, but not bad-natured. His ungallant manner toward his wife is not the result of cruelty or dislike, but of indifference, owing to their long uninteresting union. He wears country clothes—a brown or gray suit. His clothes are of good quality, but he evidently takes no care of his appearance. His suit needs pressing, and he is not trim about the neck.* MRS. MOXON *follows her husband on and closes the door. She is a gentle but apparently uninteresting creature whose mind and emotions have become sluggish. In appearance she is dowdy but not eccentric. She wears a dull cloth dress, with no pretensions to style. Her hair is unbecomingly done, but her appearance is not untidy.*

WHITE.

[*Going toward the* MOXONS, *shakes hands with* MOXON.] Ah, Moxon—may I introduce my cousin, Captain Drew.

MOXON.

Oh. [*Going toward* DREW.] Very pleased to make your acquaintance.

DREW.

Thanks. [DREW *is about to go and shake hands with* MRS. MOXON *when* MOXON *interposes his own hand.*] Oh, how d'ye do?

[*He shakes hands with* MOXON, *then with* MRS. MOXON.

MOXON.

I understand it's some time since you were in dear old England.

DREW.

I've scarcely been at home at all for years. So as soon as I arrived I went straight off to London on the bust. [WHITE *coughs warningly*] I should say I've been spending a few most agreeable days in London, and I drifted down here yesterday.

MOXON.

Yesterday—ah. And what are you going to do with yourself in this dull place?

DREW.

[*Glancing at* WHITE.] Ernest and I were just discussing that.

WHITE.

[*Hurriedly.*] We shall ride and play golf and go for walks.

DREW.

In the daytime. [*Glances at* MRS. MOXON.] But, of course, there are the evenings.

MRS. MOXON.

There are several nice games that two can play. [DREW *smiles at* WHITE.

WHITE.

She means you and me.

MRS. MOXON.

There is chess, or draughts, or dominoes, or bezique, or ——

MOXON.

[*To* MRS. MOXON.] We are all waiting for you to sit down.

[MRS. MOXON *immediately seats herself near the table. The others also sit down.*

DREW.

What jolly country it is about here!

MRS. MOXON.

Is it not?

DREW.

The only thing that spoils it is that great, ugly ironworks, or whatever it is, over there.
[*Points to the window.*

WHITE.

Oh!

DREW.

[*Turning to* WHITE.] Eh?

MOXON.

[*With dignity.*] That is my Bleach Works.

DREW.

[*Not knowing what to say.*] Oh! You bleach, do you? Ah, charming profession. [*To* WHITE.] Ernest, why don't you bleach or do something useful?

WHITE.

[*Helplessly.*] I can't work. It would be no use me trying.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Complacently.*] I think every one should do some work.

MOXON.

[*Looking at* WHITE *with disapproval.*] Certainly.

[*Enter* MISS MILLS. *She is a pretty, coquettish young woman, stylishly dressed. She wears her hat.*

MISS MILLS.

Well, here you all are!

WHITE.

[*Rising and going to meet* MISS MILLS, *he says effusively.*] Oh, Miss Mills. How do you do? I'm so pleased.

MISS MILLS.

[*Taking no notice of* WHITE, *but smiling at* DREW, *who rises as she enters.*] Will you introduce me, please?

MOXON.

[*To* MRS. MOXON.] Aren't you going to?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Confused and hesitating at being suddenly called upon.*] Oh!

WHITE.

[*Introducing them.*] Captain Drew, Miss Mills.

[MISS MILLS *goes quickly toward* DREW *and shakes hands with him.*

MISS MILLS.

I suppose you thought I was Mrs. Moxon's daughter?

DREW.

[*Embarrassed.*] Oh, no. [MISS MILLS *looks slightly piqued.*] Not that you look too old to be her daughter. [MISS MILLS *smiles.* MRS. MOXON *looks toward* DREW.] Only she looks too young to be your mother. [MRS. MOXON *looks away, indifferent to the compliment.* DREW *says to* MISS MILLS.] Please don't ask me any more like that.

WHITE.

[*Approaching* MISS MILLS *and smiling.*] Well, Miss Mills.

MISS MILLS.

[*Distantly to* WHITE.] Quite well, thank you. [*To* DREW.] Shall we sit down, Captain Drew?

[*She moves to the round seat.* DREW *follows her and they sit.*

WHITE.

It is so unfortunate. You know, I've only furnished one bedroom at my place at present, the one I use myself—so I've had to do a make-shift for Hal.

MOXON.

I suppose a sailor can curl up anywhere.

MISS MILLS.

[*Who keeps looking admiringly at* DREW.] Just slings up a hammock, I expect.

DREW.

He loves a real bed, one that he can kick about in.

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling.*] What a good description.

WHITE.

I've put Hal in the studio at the end of the garden. You know a painter had the house before me, and he built rather a good studio.

MOXON.

A bit lonely, I should say.

DREW.

I don't mind that, only [*smiling*] it seems rather a sin not to be carrying on a flirtation. Such an ideal spot for secret meetings.

[MISS MILLS *is the only one who laughs.* MRS. MOXON *turns from* DREW *with marked disapproval.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*To* WHITE.] How are your rose-trees doing this summer?

WHITE.

Pretty well.

MRS. MOXON.

Our John Hoppers are suffering from green-fly, but the William Allen Richardsons are doing well.

MOXON.

I'm sorry I must leave you, gentlemen, but I'm due at the Works.

MRS. MOXON.

[*To* MOXON.] You did not tell me you were going back to the Works to-day.

MOXON.

Well, my dear, I suppose I don't need to come and tell you every time I make a business appointment.

MRS. MOXON.

Of course not, dear, if you don't wish to.

MOXON.

I didn't say I didn't wish to.

MRS. MOXON.

I didn't mean anything, George—at least, to be strictly truthful, I only meant it is Saturday afternoon.

MOXON.

Yes, well, I've been so busy all week, I have to sign my letters this afternoon. [*Nods to* WHITE.] Good-day, White.

WHITE.

Good-day.

MOXON.

Good-day, Captain Drew.

DREW.

Good-day, Mr. Moxon.

MOXON.

[*Going toward the window and then stopping.*] Oh!

[*He returns to* MRS. MOXON, *bends down, and kisses her on the cheek. She receives the kiss passively.* MOXON *goes out.*

DREW.

[*To* MISS MILLS.] Is Mr. Moxon going on a journey?

MISS MILLS.

[*Wondering.*] No. He'll be home to dinner. [*She sees* DREW'S *meaning.*] Oh, you mean because he kissed her?

DREW.

Yes.

MISS MILLS.

He always does when he goes to the Works; ever since they were married.

DREW.

What a charming attention!

MISS MILLS.

I think it is only a habit now.

[*Their attention is attracted by* MRS. MOXON *rising abruptly and hurrying to the window as she takes her handkerchief from her pocket.*

DREW.

I'm afraid Mrs. Moxon is going to be ill. [MRS. MOXON *waves her handkerchief from the window.*] Oh, I thought she was going to be ill.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, no! She always waves her handkerchief when Mr. Moxon turns the corner.

DREW.

Another habit?

MISS MILLS.

Yes. Isn't it silly to keep it up so many years?

DREW.

Perhaps neither of them likes to suggest stopping it.

MISS MILLS.

I'd stop it with my husband soon enough. Of course, I haven't one yet. [*Confidentially.*] I'm not engaged, either.

DREW.

[*He turns quickly to her.*] Not engaged! You don't say so.

WHITE.

[*Overhearing them.*] Oh, I say!

[*He moves away.*

MISS MILLS.

Look at Mr. White. He's so angry with you.

DREW.

Why?

MISS MILLS.

[*Archly.*] Why? You a sailor and ask that. [*She rises and goes toward the table followed by* DREW.] Aren't these roses pretty? I arranged them. [*Touching the roses she says sweetly.*] I whisper all my secrets to the roses.

DREW.

Is that why they look so red in the face?

[*They sit by the table and converse in an animated fashion.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Taking a floral catalogue from a table near the window, approaches* WHITE.] Have you seen this new floral catalogue?

WHITE.

[*Who watches* DREW *and* MISS MILLS *jealously all the time he is talking to* MRS. MOXON.] No.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Opening the catalogue and putting it into* WHITE'S *hands.*] I intend to have some of these Lilliums in the garden next year. They make such a pretty variety with the Aquilegias.

WHITE.

Yes.

MRS. MOXON.

I must have some peonies, too. I don't know whether to have Modesty or Rosea Plenissima Superba.

WHITE.

I should have them both.

[WHITE *clears his throat to attract* DREW'S *attention.* MRS. MOXON, *busy with the catalogue, does not notice.*

DREW.

[*Whose back is toward* WHITE, *says to* MISS MILLS.] Eh?

MISS MILLS.

It's only Mr. White. [*Bows and smiles pleasantly to* WHITE, *then says to* DREW.] I do wish I could get Martha to smarten up a bit. I'm always at her about her clothes.

DREW.

Is Martha Mrs. Moxon?

MISS MILLS,

[*Laughing.*] Of course.

DREW.

And what are you?

MISS MILLS.

My name is Isolda.

DREW.

[*Pretending to be impressed.*] Isolda!

MISS MILLS.

My friends call me Izzy.

[DREW *laughs.* MISS MILLS *laughs, too.* MRS. MOXON *replaces the catalogue on the table and then sits beside the fireplace. At the same time* WHITE *approaches* DREW *and touches him on the shoulder.* DREW *turns to him.*

WHITE.

[*In an undertone to* DREW.] This is Mrs. Moxon. [*He indicates* MRS. MOXON *with his head.*] Not this. [*He indicates* MISS MILLS.

DREW.

I know, I know—this is Izzy.

WHITE.

Oh, I say! [*He rejoins* MRS. MOXON.

MISS MILLS.

[*Delighted.*] You mustn't call me Izzy. You'll shock Martha. I often shock her.

DREW.

Do you?

MISS MILLS.

Sometimes I put on one of Mr. Moxon's hats and pretend I'm a man.

DREW.

How wild!

MISS MILLS.

That's me all over; you don't half know me yet.

[WHITE *comes down and touches* DREW *on the shoulder as before.* DREW *turns to him.*

WHITE.

I thought you wanted to make an impression on Mrs. Moxon.

DREW.

[*In an undertone to* WHITE.] It is always a good plan to begin by turning your back.

[*He turns to* MISS MILLS, *and talks to her across the table.*

WHITE.

[*Watching them.*] It's too bad! [*He turns to* MRS. MOXON, *and says abruptly.*] We must go.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Apparently relieved by the prospect of their leaving.*] Must you? Good-bye.

[*She shakes hands with* WHITE.

WHITE.

[*Turning to* DREW, *he calls.*] Hal! [DREW *and* MISS MILLS *are conversing in undertone, and take no notice. He calls again.*] Hal!

DREW.

[*Turning.*] Eh?

WHITE.

It's time we went.

[DREW *remains seated.* MISS MILLS *springs up.*

MISS MILLS.

Oh! Well, I'm going to the Fishers', so I'll walk with you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Innocently.*] You went to the Fishers' this morning.

MISS MILLS.

Yes, and left my umbrella.

MRS. MOXON.

No, dear; it's in the hall.

[MISS MILLS *signs to* MRS. MOXON *to say no more as she flutters toward her.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Whispering to* MRS. MOXON.] I've made another conquest.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, Izzy, dear! [*Glancing at* DREW.] I don't think he is quite nice.

[MISS MILLS *laughs airily as she goes toward the door.*

MISS MILLS.

[*With her head on one side calls sweetly.*] Captain Drew!

DREW.

[*Carelessly, as he turns over a book at the table.*] You two shove off. I'm going to stay and talk to Mrs. Moxon.

[MRS. MOXON *glances uneasily at* DREW, *who is not looking at her, then at* MISS MILLS.

MISS MILLS.

[*Momentarily annoyed.*] Oh. [*She smiles as she goes to* MRS. MOXON *and says in her ear.*] I expect he wants to ask you all about me. Come along, Mr. White, I suppose I must put up with *you.*

WHITE.

Oh, I say.

MISS MILLS.

And don't choose a path where I am always having to climb stiles.

[MISS MILLS *goes out followed by* WHITE. MRS. MOXON *sits rigidly on the round seat looking very uneasy. She speaks when* DREW *lays down his book and looks toward her.*

MRS. MOXON.

I don't know that there is much to tell. Her mother was at school with my aunt, so that would make her about twenty-six. She's a nice girl, or rather young woman, and not nearly so nonsensical as she seems.

DREW.

[*Puzzled.*] Who?

MRS. MOXON.

Miss Mills.

DREW.

Mills, Mills, Mills—oh, Izzy!

MRS. MOXON.

[*Weakly.*] I thought perhaps you admired her.

DREW.

[*Ingratiatingly.*] I prefer—married women.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Embarrassed.*] Oh!

DREW.

There's more to talk about. I mean marriage always improves women.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Softening.*] I think perhaps you are right.

DREW.

It's so unfortunate that it never improves men.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Indulgently.*] It should do.

DREW.

Yes, it should, but it doesn't! The men who marry unhappily become ill-natured, and those who marry happily are so insufferably self-satisfied. For ideal companionship give me a married woman and a bachelor.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Seriously.*] Oh, how shocking.

[*She looks away from him uneasily.*

DREW.

[*Glancing at her, says to himself.*] Too soon. [*Cheerfully to* MRS. MOXON.] Now, Mrs. Moxon, tell me all about your little boys.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Looking pleased as she turns to him.*] Are you fond of children?

DREW.

I adore them. When Ernest White asked me what I'd like to do this afternoon I said, "Take me to see those dear little boys."

MRS. MOXON.

Had he told you about them?

DREW.

Oh, yes—all their pranks and their little mischievous ways.

MRS. MOXON.

They are very good boys.

DREW.

Just what Ernest said, "Such good boys."

MRS. MOXON.

I'm sorry they are not here.

DREW.

[*Alarmed.*] Don't send for them. [MRS. MOXON *looks surprised.*] I mean, why disturb them? They'll be having tea in the nursery or playing rounders in the garden.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, no.

DREW.

Well, anyway, it's always a pity to bring children into the drawing-room. It makes them so self-conscious, don't you think?

MRS. MOXON.

They are away at school.

DREW.

[*Feigning disappointment.*] Shan't I see them? Oh, that is too bad! [*Confidentially.*] And how are they getting on at school?

MRS. MOXON.

Sydney is top of his class in geography, and we hope Ronald will take the prize for good conduct.

DREW.

Oh, what wonderful boys! And which is the most like you? Sydney or Ronald?

MRS. MOXON.

I'll show you their portraits, then you can judge for yourself.

[*She rises and goes to the table for the photograph album.*

DREW.

[*Speaking as she goes.*] Oh, yes. Do let me see their pictures. [*As she places the album on the table.*] What a nice fat album.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Standing beside him and showing him the photographs in the album.*] These were taken last term. This is Sydney.

DREW.

[*Pointing to another photograph.*] And here's Donald.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Correcting him.*] Ronald.

DREW.

Ronald, to be sure. What very fine boys for their ages.

MRS. MOXON.

We consider them small for eight and ten.

DREW.

Eight and ten! But you haven't been married ten years! I mean—you must have been married very young.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Simply.*] I was twenty-five.

DREW.

Now I do like to hear you so frank about your age.

MRS. MOXON.

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

DREW.

No, but so many women were married at sixteen. [*She points to another photograph.*] There's Graham on your lap.

MRS. MOXON.

No, that's Sydney with the nurse.

DREW.

[*Expressing surprise and looking very closely at the photograph.*] The nurse? What a very pretty girl. Such a refined looking young woman.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes, Eliza was a superior girl. We were sorry to part with her.

DREW.

So should I have been.

MRS. MOXON.

But her mother died of—pleurisy, I think it was ——

DREW.

Yes, very nice.

MRS. MOXON.

And so she had to go and keep house for her father—so ——

DREW.

[*Closing the album and returning it to* MRS. MOXON *to stop her telling him any more about Eliza.*] Thank you.

MRS. MOXON.

You have not said which of the boys you consider most like me.

DREW.

[*Standing opposite to her and opening the album again.*] Oh, no, let me see. [*Looking at her critically.*] I should say Sydney is most like you about the eyes, but Tommy's got your nose.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Taking the album, she says quietly.*] Their names are Sydney and Ronald.

DREW.

[*Sentimentally, while they both hold the album.*] You must feel lonely without them?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Wistfully.*] A little.

DREW.

You need a companion.

MRS. MOXON.

I should dearly like to have one. [*He leans a little toward her; she looks at him.*] But Mr. Moxon says he can't afford her salary. [*She replaces the album under the table.* DREW *laughs and turns it into a cough.* MRS. MOXON *looks at him innocently and kindly.*] You have a cough?

DREW.

[*Coughing and hitting his chest.*] It's one of those dreadful hyena coughs—sounds like laughing. I often have it.

MRS. MOXON.

You must take care of yourself.

DREW.

[*Sentimentally.*] I need some one to take care of me.

MRS. MOXON.

[*In a matter-of-fact manner.*] We have a very good practitioner in the village—Mr. Bush, 1 Victoria Polygon.

[*She moves away from him.*

DREW.

[*Cheerfully.*] Now, Mrs. Moxon, I want you to make yourself quite at home.

MRS. MOXON.

[*In mild surprise.*] I *am* at home.

DREW.

Of course. I mean just go on as if I wasn't here. Where's your work-basket?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Unconsciously pleased to be ordered about.*] Must I get it?

DREW.

Yes, do. [*Seeing her work-basket on a table near the window.*] Ah, there it is! [*He goes and gets it as* MRS. MOXON *drags a chair beside the round seat.*] Woolwork, of course; I knew you'd do woolwork. [*Seeing* MRS. MOXON *with the chair he goes to her assistance.*] Oh, is this for me?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Placing the chair near the round seat.*] No. I was going to place my skein over the back of it. [*Taking a skein of red wool from the basket and preparing to place it over the back of the chair.*] So.

DREW.

[*Taking the skein from her.*] No, no. I'll hold; you—you wind.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Hesitating.*] Oh, but ——

DREW.

[*Pointing to the round seat.*] You sit—there—in the bows—I'll take the stern.

[*He sits on the chair opposite to her.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Reluctantly sitting opposite him.*] Oh, very well.

DREW.

[*Cheerfully.*] Not at all. Very kind of you to ask me to help you.

[*He places the skein over his hands and holds them toward her.*

MRS. MOXON.

But I—thank you. [*She undoes the end of the skein and begins to wind.*] Do you mind not holding your hands quite so stiff, please?

DREW.

Will you arrange them the way you'd like them?

MRS. MOXON.

More so.

[*She poises her hands in the position she wants his.*

DREW.

Oh, yes. I remember. It's all coming back to me now. More of a roll.

[*He swings his hands up and down as one does in winding wool, but exaggerating the action.* MRS. MOXON *laughs and slaps his hand. She is immediately overcome with confusion.*

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to take such a liberty. I *am* ashamed.

DREW.

[*Confidentially.*] Never mind. I won't tell. [MRS. MOXON *glances shyly at him and begins to wind. After a moment's pause while they wind he says.*] Any one would take us for two old friends.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Stopping winding and saying anxiously.*] Perhaps we oughtn't to.

DREW.

It's too late to stop now. We're both so tangled up in this wool.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes. [*After a moment's reflection she says innocently.*] And the others are out.

[*She continues winding the wool quite satisfied. He smiles and watches her before he speaks.*

DREW.

You know, Mrs. Moxon, I don't think you are half appreciated here.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Pleasantly.*] How so?

DREW.

You ought to be bounding along on the ocean instead of lying up in dry dock.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Puzzled.*] What?

DREW.

How shall I put it? You could easily outshine Miss Mills.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Faintly, smiling.*] Poor Izzy! She wouldn't like that. [*Gravely.*] I think a woman should be content with her home.

[*She winds the wool rigidly.*

DREW.

Home thinks more of us if we shine outside.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Stopping the winding and saying pensively.*] I wonder.

DREW.

Make sure. [*She looks askance at him.*] Try it.

MRS. MOXON.

How?

DREW.

Let some one—me, for instance—pretend, only pretend, a great admiration for you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Assenting.*] Yes.

[*He moves a little nearer to her.*

DREW.

And you must pretend—only pretend—an extraordinary interest in me.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, no. I'm sure I could never carry it off, besides it would be very wrong.

DREW.

[*Meaningly.*] Then don't let us pretend. [*She looks askance at him.*] My admiration shall be real.

MRS. MOXON.

[*A little distressed, interrupting him.*] I can't help feeling that this is all very worldly and frivolous talk. It rather frightens me.

DREW.

[*Kindly.*] Then let us go on winding wool.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Hesitating a moment, then smiling gratefully at him.*] Thank you. [*She continues winding.*] I hope you won't think me foolish.

DREW.

[*Reassuringly.*] No, dear lady.

MRS. MOXON.

It is only that what you were saying in fun reminds me of an incident I have been trying for years to forget.

DREW.

I suppose we all have some past incidents we should like to forget.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Stopping winding and saying quickly.*] *I* was not to blame.

DREW.

It was *his* fault.

MRS. MOXON.

Entirely. I had no idea he meant anything, until he—he began to ——

[*She smiles in an embarrassed manner.*

DREW.

Did he really?

MRS. MOXON.

I had to beg him to desist. Oh, I was very much put out. Of course, it happened years ago, but whenever I see him I can't help feeling that he still bears me ill-will. [*She meets* DREW'S *eyes, and becomes disconcerted.*] But I've no business to be telling you all this.

DREW.

Have you ever told any one before?

MRS. MOXON.

Never. You see, I couldn't tell my husband. He would think it was *my* fault. I can't think how I came to tell *you.*

DREW.

I think it was very friendly of you to tell me one of your secrets.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Embarrassed.*] I—I think we've wound enough wool for to-day.

DREW.

So do I. Let's get rid of this gear and have a nice talk.

[*He takes the ball of wool from her, rolls it up with the skein, and throws it all down in a heap.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Forgetting everything but the fate of her wool, she springs up.*] Oh, my wool! My wool! [*She hastens to pick it up.*

DREW.

[*Rising to her assistance.*] I'm awfully sorry —really—do let me help you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*As she eludes him and goes to the table with the tangled skein in her hands.*] You'll only make it worse. [*She spreads the skein on the table and says reproachfully.*] You *have* made a mess of it.

[*She undoes the tangle during the following dialogue.*

DREW.

[*Standing, watching her.*] I can see I shall need a lot more lessons in wool-winding. When may I come and have the next?

MRS. MOXON.

I'm afraid I haven't often any time to waste like this.

DREW.

What else is there to do in the country?

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, a great deal. I have my housekeeping and my rose-garden, and the hens.

DREW.

I'm awfully keen on all kinds of garden produce. We might potter round together.

MRS. MOXON.

But generally I have calls to pay, and every Monday afternoon there is the Dorcas Meeting, and once a fortnight we have our literary society. Several of us ladies meet at each other's houses and read a play by Shakespeare. We took "King Lear" last time. [*Looks up at him.*] So you see my time is very fully occupied.

DREW.

That is the tragedy of the naval officer. Everybody's life is full when he comes home. I hoped you would let me come and talk to you sometimes. It would do me so much good. But, of course, if you are too busy with Dorcas and "King Lear"——

[MRS. MOXON *looks sympathetically at him during this speech. When he has finished speaking she approaches him slowly and rather timidly.*

MRS. MOXON.

I'm not busy *quite* all the time.

[*Enter* MOXON.

MOXON.

I whistled.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Going toward* MOXON, *and appearing deeply concerned.*] Oh, George, I *am* sorry.

DREW.

[*Puzzled.*] Whistled?

MRS. MOXON.

[*To* DREW.] He always whistles when he comes from the Works, ever since we were married, and this is the first time I have not heard him.

MOXON.

I've just seen Hassell. He's coming here directly.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Turns quickly to her husband, expressing surprise and disapproval as she says.*] Oh!

MOXON.

He asked if Miss Mills would be at home. Of course, I don't know—he didn't tell me—but I'd make a bet that he wants to propose to her.

MRS. MOXON.

[*With emphasis and showing great concern.*] Chester Hassell wants to propose to Izzy!

DREW.

[*Turns to* MR. *and* MRS. MOXON.] Did you say *Chester* Hassell?

MOXON.

Yes—do you know him?

DREW.

[*Evasively.*] I *did* know him.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Watching* DREW.] *I* don't like him either.

MOXON.

Well, my dear, he's coming to propose to Miss Mills—not you. [*Looking off from the window.*] Oh, there she is, coming across the lawn with Ernest White. I'd better warn her. [*He goes to the window and beckons.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Glancing at* MOXON'S *back before she approaches* DREW *and saying to him, anxiously.*] It must not be allowed. He's a dreadful man. [*Dropping her voice.*] He is that man I was telling you about.

DREW.

[*Gravely.*] By Jove! Was that Hassell? Does Miss Mills care for him?

MRS. MOXON.

I don't know.

DREW.

Has she encouraged him?

MRS. MOXON.

Izzy encourages everybody.

DREW.

[*To himself.*] Poor old Ernest! [*To* MRS. MOXON.] Anyhow, we must stop her marrying Hassell.

MRS. MOXON.

Indeed, yes. Do help me.

[MRS. MOXON *moves away from* DREW *as* MISS MILLS *enters by the window.*

MISS MILLS.

Do you want me?

MOXON.

[*Winking at the others.*] Watch her blush. [*To* MISS MILLS.] I've got a piece of news for you, young lady. Chester Hassell is coming here this afternoon—to see *you.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling complacently.*] I know what for. Whenever I go to the Fishers' he always turns up. It's quite a joke between Lucy Fisher and me.

DREW.

[*To* MOXON.] Do you know this man—Hassell—very well?

MOXON.

I can't say we are intimate, but we are neighbourly. He's quite a nice fellow.

MRS. MOXON.

I don't agree with you.

MOXON.

[*Impatiently.*] You are so hard to please.

DREW.

Has Hassell lived here long?

MOXON.

Oh, yes, he was here before *we* came. His mother had a little house on the other side of the village. He lived there with her till she died.

MISS MILLS.

He went into lodgings after the sale.

DREW.

What does he do?

MOXON.

Lives on what his mother left him. I don't suppose it was much. He is the treasurer of our little club here.

DREW.

Oh, yes. And don't you find that your little club is generally in debt?

MOXON.

[*Innocently.*] Do you know—that's a strange thing. We are always in debt.

MISS MILLS.

Mr. Moxon doesn't know what you mean, but *I* do.

MOXON.

I know nothing against Hassell, and I prefer to take a charitable view of people.

MISS MILLS.

[*Thoughtfully.*] He's rather handsome.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Going toward* MISS MILLS, *she says earnestly.*] Oh. He's not a *nice* man.

MOXON.

[*Turning impatiently to her.*] What do *you* know against him?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Solemnly.*] He drinks.

MOXON.

How do you know?

MRS. MOXON.

The Fishers' cook told our cook.

MOXON.

I'm surprised you gossip with the cook.

MISS MILLS.

One must treat the servants as equals nowadays—to keep them in their places.

DREW.

I know Hassell used to be foxed a good deal of the time when he was in the service.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, yes—I remember now. We heard he was in the Navy.

DREW.

[*Deliberately.*] He *was.*

MOXON.

Perhaps you know more about him than we do?

DREW.

Possibly.

MISS MILLS.

I can see he did something. Do tell us what it was.

DREW.

I'd rather not. [*Hesitating before he adds.*] Unless you seriously think of ——

MISS MILLS.

[*Airily.*] Oh, you needn't be afraid that I shall marry the creature.

DREW.

Then there's no need for me to tell you anything. I only thought—if you cared for him—it might be my duty to warn you, especially as Ernest told me you are an heiress.

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling.*] Yes.

MOXON.

She's only got six thousand pounds.

MISS MILLS.

[*Annoyed.*] That's an heiress.

MRS. MOXON.

I don't think I should call that an heiress, dear; I shouldn't call anything less than ten thousand pounds an heiress.

DREW.

Anyway, Miss Mills says she is not going to accept him—so that settles it. We needn't discuss him. I'm sure I don't want to do him any harm, and I certainly don't want to meet him—so I'll go and find Ernest in the garden. [*He goes to the window, calling.*] Ernest! Ernest!

[*Exit* DREW.

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling.*] It is quite evident that Captain Drew doesn't wish me to marry Mr. Hassell.

MOXON.

That's probably at the bottom of it all. Some old rivalry, no doubt. And if White told him you are an heiress! Who knows? He may have designs on you himself.

MRS. MOXON.

I don't think *that* is charitable.

MISS MILLS.

It's possible.

MOXON.

[*To* MISS MILLS.] Certainly it is. [*To* MRS. MOXON.] It is *you* who are not charitable. I don't like the way you attack Hassell, for no reason at all. It is likely to do him an injury, and if it was traced back it might be very uncomfortable for us. I shall certainly go out of my way to be agreeable to Hassell the next time I meet him. I shall make a point of showing him that *I*, the head of the house, am quite willing to be friendly. Yes, I shall.

[*Exit* MOXON.

MISS MILLS.

He *can* be exasperating.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Irritated.*] Oh, yes. He is —— [*Pauses and then says quietly.*] He is my husband.

MISS MILLS.

I *should* like to know what Mr. Hassell did, shouldn't you, Martha?

MRS. MOXON.

No, dear, I think Captain Drew is right.

MISS MILLS.

[*A little surprised.*] You said *he* wasn't quite nice just now.

MRS. MOXON.

I find I misjudged him. Whatever this scandal is, it does not affect us. You need not even see Mr. Hassell when he calls.

MISS MILLS.

I think I'd better see him.

MRS. MOXON.

It is not necessary, and it would only embarrass you both.

MISS MILLS.

I think I'd better see him.

MRS. MOXON.

But you don't intend to accept him?

MISS MILLS.

No.

MRS. MOXON.

Then why see him? [MISS MILLS *does not reply.* MRS. MOXON *goes toward her before she says half incredulously.*] It can't be that you wish him to propose in order that you may refuse him!

MISS MILLS.

[*Looks extremely disconcerted, then says indignantly.*] No, I don't know how you can suggest such a thing, Martha.

[*Enter the* MAIDSERVANT.

MAID.

Mr. Chester Hassell to see Miss Mills.

MISS MILLS.

I will see Mr. Hassell. [*The* MAID *goes out.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Reproachfully.*] Izzy!

MISS MILLS.

You are not going to stay in the room, are you?

MRS. MOXON.

You must do as you wish.

[MRS. MOXON *goes out into the garden.* MISS MILLS *rises and goes to the looking-glass, prinks herself a little, then*

comes to the table, takes a rose with a long stem from vase and sits arranging her dress effectively, and toying with the rose. Enter the MAID.

MAID.

Mr. Chester Hassell.

[*Enter* CHESTER HASSELL. *He is a dissipated, but fine-looking, well dressed man about thirty-five. The* MAID *goes out.*

HASSELL.

[*Going to shake hands with* MISS MILLS.] This *is* fortunate—to find you alone.

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling and shaking hands.*] Oh, thank you.

HASSELL.

[*Moving to a chair near her.*] May I sit here?

MISS MILLS.

Do.

HASSELL.

[*Impressively.*] I dare say you can guess what I have come to ask you.

MISS MILLS.

No. [*She smells her rose.*

HASSELL.

I am going abroad.

MISS MILLS.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh! have you only come to say good-bye?

HASSELL.

I hope not. [MISS MILLS *drops her eyes.*] I find it necessary to go abroad.

MISS MILLS.

[*Glancing up suspiciously.*] Necessary?

HASSELL.

[*Quickly.*] For my health.

MISS MILLS.

I see.

HASSELL.

We have met fairly often lately.

MISS MILLS.

[*Sentimentally.*] Yes.

HASSELL.

On the several occasions that I have met you at Mrs. Fisher's you have been more than kind. I have been led to hope ——

MISS MILLS.

[*Rises, affecting maidenly confusion.*] Oh, Mr. Hassell!

HASSELL.

[*Rising.*] I should have spoken sooner, but for one thing. I heard you were rich. I do not know whether you have the control of your fortune or not. [*He pauses a moment for her to reply.* MISS MILLS *tears the petals from her rose and scatters them on the floor so he repeats.*] I say I do not know.

MISS MILLS.

Pa left it to me to do as I liked with. [*Suspiciously.*] But why? Would it have made any difference?

HASSELL.

Not the least. Rich or poor, I love you madly.

[*He comes toward her. She puts out her hand to restrain him.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Sentimentally.*] I cannot love you.

HASSELL.

[*Disconcerted.*] What! But you were so encouraging.

MISS MILLS.

I didn't wish to seem unkind.

[*She moves away from him.*

HASSELL.

[*Sneering as he follows her.*] That was very considerate of you, but the alternative was not to flirt as outrageously as you have done.

MISS MILLS.

[*Dropping the sentimental pose and becoming indignant.*] Oh! That's very rude!

HASSELL.

You know you can't lead a man on till he makes an ass of himself, and then walk away, saying you don't love him, without giving a reason.

MISS MILLS.

Yes, I can if I want to.

HASSELL.

You have often gone out of your way to meet me.

MISS MILLS.

[*Indignantly.*] Oh!

HASSELL.

The first time I met you at the Fishers' you hung about till every one had gone, and asked

me to see you home. And as you left me at the gate you told me when you'd be at the Fishers' again.

MISS MILLS.

[*Pointing to the door.*] Leave the room!

HASSELL.

It's not losing you I mind so much. It's the waste of time.

MISS MILLS.

[*Bursting with indignation.*] Oh! I believe all the things I've heard about you now.

HASSELL.

What things?

MISS MILLS.

Never mind.

HASSELL.

[*Going toward her.*] Who has told you anything against me?

MISS MILLS.

People.

HASSELL.

[*Seizing her wrist.*] What people?

MISS MILLS.

Take your hand away.

HASSELL.

Not until you tell me what people.

MISS MILLS.

Mrs. Moxon.

HASSELL.

[*Releasing her, and saying scornfully.*] That saint!

MISS MILLS.

It's very ill-bred of you to call her names while you are in her drawing-room. [*As* HASSELL *goes toward the door.*] She is not the only one either.

HASSELL.

[*Turning quickly to her at the door.*] Who else?

MISS MILLS.

Captain Drew.

HASSELL.

[*Alarmed.*] Drew?

MISS MILLS.

Of the Royal Navy.

HASSELL.

[*Recovering his self-control.*] All right. Let me ever catch Captain Drew in a peccadillo, or

Mrs. Moxon either. It will be the worse for them. [*Exit* HASSELL.

MISS MILLS.

[*Nearly crying.*] He's no gentleman.

[*Enter* MRS. MOXON *from the garden.*

MRS. MOXON.

How loudly you were talking.

MISS MILLS.

He's been so rude.

MRS. MOXON.

What did he say ?

MISS MILLS.

Don't ask me. I'm throbbing all over.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Pointing to the plucked rose stem which* MISS MILLS *still holds.*] What are you doing with that rose stalk ?

MISS MILLS.

[*Angrily.*] Nothing. [*She throws the rose stem on the floor and stamps on it, then crosses to the door as she says.*] I'm going up-stairs to have a good cry. [*She turns to* MRS. MOXON *when she reaches the door.*] Martha—he *did* propose.

[*Exit* MISS MILLS. MRS. MOXON *picks up the rose stem, then turns and sees the rose petals* MISS MILLS *has dropped. She stoops down and gathers them up. Enter* DREW *from the garden.*

DREW.

Housekeeping?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Serious and worried.*] Yes. I do so dislike messes.

[*She throws the rose leaves in the waste-paper basket.*

DREW.

I must go now. [*Holding out his hand he says tenderly.*] Good-bye.

MRS. MOXON.

Good-bye. [*She allows him to retain her hand as she says.*] If it really does you any good to talk to me, do come again.

DREW.

Thanks, dear lady, I will.

[*Enter* WHITE *from the garden.* DREW'S *back is toward the window, so he does not see him.* MRS. MOXON *sees him, and withdraws her hand.*

MRS. MOXON.

I will tell my husband you are leaving.
[*She goes out quickly.*

WHITE.

[*Going toward* DREW.] I say, she's not going to let you make love to her, is she?

DREW.

You never know; but one thing is certain.

WHITE.

What?

DREW.

I'm falling in love with *her*.

WHITE.

What!

DREW.

She's so quaint and funny and touching. Oh, she's charming!

WHITE.

But what will be the end of it?

DREW.

Never mind the end. This is only the beginning. Never look ahead, man—never look ahead. [*They go out.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE.—*The same as the first act. It is a summer evening after dinner a month later and the lamps are lighted.*

As the curtain rises, MRS. MOXON *comes in followed by* MISS MILLS. *They both wear dinner dress. There is a great change in* MRS. MOXON'S *appearance. She is charmingly dressed, and wears her hair becomingly. There are some red roses in her dress.*

MISS MILLS.

I'm so glad to see you have taken my advice about dressing better.

MRS. MOXON.

[*A little anxiously.*] I hope you don't think I am trying to look too young.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, no! Married women dress just like girls now. I can't think why, because we, of course, dress to please everybody, while you, I suppose, dress only to please your husband.

[MRS. MOXON *smells the flowers in vase.*

MRS. MOXON.

What a delicious perfume these flowers have!

MISS MILLS.

How amusing Captain Drew was at dinner!

MRS. MOXON.

He is always so merry.

MISS MILLS.

I'm surprised he gets on so slowly with women. [*Unconsciously*, MRS. MOXON *looks a little amazed.*] He has been coming to the house nearly every day for a month, and I don't feel as if I know him any better than I did at first. He is always so respectful.

MRS. MOXON.

We should not care to be so friendly with him if he were not.

MISS MILLS.

It amuses me so the way he always pretends that he comes to see *you.*

MRS. MOXON.

It is quite appropriate that he should ask for me when he calls.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, quite, and I think he likes you; but we all know why he comes so often—don't we, dear?

MRS. MOXON.

[*A little anxiously.*] Did he ever tell you he comes to see you?

MISS MILLS.

Oh, no, he never told me, but a woman always knows. [*Men's voices heard outside.*] Here they are.

[*Enter* DREW, WHITE *and* MOXON. *They all wear dinner clothes.* DREW *at once makes for* MRS. MOXON. WHITE *joins* MISS MILLS.

DREW.

[*Whispering to* MRS. MOXON.] How well that gown becomes you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Pleased and nervous.*] I'm so glad you like it. [*Passing him and going to* MOXON, *at the same time drawing a letter from her pocket.*] I had a letter from Ronald before dinner.

MOXON.

Oh, well, I suppose there's no need to read it just now. I'm going outside to smoke.

MRS. MOXON.

Shall I come out and read it to you?

MOXON.

Give a fellow time to digest his dinner.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes, George, there's no hurry. I only thought you might like news of the boys.

MOXON.

By and by. I suppose they are all right?

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, yes, they are quite well.
[*She reads the letter to herself, smiling affectionately.*

MOXON.

[*Addressing* DREW *and* WHITE.] What do you say to a smoke on the terrace?

WHITE.

Thank you. A cigarette in the moonlight. Miss Mills —— [*He goes out with* MOXON.

MISS MILLS.

Yes, I'll come, too. Captain Drew, we are all going out to smoke.

DREW.

Are we? [MISS MILLS *goes out into the garden. Watching* MRS. MOXON *as she reads her letter.*] And what has Ronald got to say?

MRS. MOXON.

Would you like to read it?

DREW.

[*Smiling kindly.*] No, I should like to hear you read it.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Reading.*] "My dear Mamma,—I hope you are quite well. I am quite well. Sydney is quite well. We played cricket yesterday. I made two runs and Sydney made six runs. Palmer made duck. I was very glad, 'cos he hit me one day once, but I did not cry. Love to papa. Your loving little son, Ronald."

DREW.

Funny little chap!

MRS. MOXON.

[*Showing the letter to* DREW.] Doesn't he write well for eight?

DREW.

[*Now sitting beside her.*] Splendid!

MRS. MOXON.

It's too bad of me to make you listen to the boy's letters.

DREW.

[*Cheerfully and kindly.*] I always want to hear how Sydney and Ronald are getting on.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Gratefully.*] That is so kind of you.

DREW.

Lucky little lads to have such a mother.

MRS. MOXON.

They will soon be able to do without me. The first break comes when they go to school. Before that I used to do everything for them. Tuck them up in bed, make them get up in the morning, teach them their letters, and play "I spy" in the garden. [*Sighing.*] But already they can do so many things without me.

DREW.

They soon learn to fly by themselves, don't they?

MRS. MOXON.

Boys do. One keeps girls longer.

DREW.

You'd have liked a little girl?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Sadly.*] I had a little girl—once. She died. [*Through her tears.*] There—there. We must make up our minds to bear the things we can't help, and the boys will soon be home for their midsummer holidays.

DREW.

[*With a touch of regret.*] When the boys come home I expect you won't have much time for me.

MRS. MOXON.

I think I shall still be able to squeeze out a little time for you.

DREW.

You won't *quite* forget me when I go back to sea?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Simply.*] I shall never forget you. [*With a little anxiety.*] But you are not going away yet?

DREW.

I've had no orders. Don't let us think about that. I'm so happy here, I want to forget I ever have to go away. What shall we do to-morrow?

MRS. MOXON.

In the morning we must stake up the lilies and take cuttings from the picotees—that is, if you can spare the time.

DREW.

I wish that I had something really important to do to-morrow morning.

MRS. MOXON.

So that you would have an excuse?

DREW.

No, so that I could give it up to come and garden with *you*.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Smiling.*] Oh!

DREW.

What shall we do in the afternoon?

MRS. MOXON.

To-morrow is my day at home.

DREW.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh!

MRS. MOXON.

Perhaps no one will come.

DREW.

I don't suppose any one will.

MRS. MOXON.

Sometimes I have as many as *six* ladies in my drawing-room at one time.

DREW.

Let them amuse each other, and come for a walk in the woods with me.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Doubtfully.*] Oh, I don't know.

DREW.

You will?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Gravely.*] Unless my husband requires me.

DREW.

Yes, of course. [*He pauses a moment before he adds.*] In that case we must go the next day.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Cheerfully.*] Very well. [*She sees he is smiling.*] Why do you smile?

DREW.

I don't know. I was thinking—how wrong our first impressions often are.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes. Do you know, I didn't approve of you at first.

DREW.

You mean you do now?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Simply.*] I think you know whether I do or not.

DREW.

That first day!

MRS. MOXON.

That day we wound the wool.

DREW.

And you said I might come and see you sometimes, if it would do me any good. I can't tell you what good it has done me to know you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*In a quiet ecstasy.*] I'm so glad, for you have done so much for me. You'll never know how much.

DREW.

[*Leaning toward her and taking her hand.*] There is nothing I would not do for you.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Looking gratefully at him then becoming timid, and withdrawing her hand.*] You had better join the others now.

[*She moves away from him.*

DREW.

Are *you* coming?

MRS. MOXON.

Presently. I am going up-stairs for my cloud.

DREW.

Don't leave me yet.

MRS. MOXON.

[*She turns and asks innocently.*] Why?

DREW.

I mean—please give me a rose.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Smiling.*] Willingly.

[*She takes a rose from her dress and gives it to him. He encloses her hand and the rose in both his hands and looks at her intently. She looks at him, first wondering, then timidly. Then she withdraws her hand, leaving the rose in his and goes toward the door.*

DREW.

I'll wait for you here.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Nervously.*] No, don't wait for me.

[*Exit* MRS. MOXON. DREW *smiles as he puts the rose in his coat.* MISS MILLS *enters from the garden. She appears irresolute.*

MISS MILLS.

It's a little chilly out-of-doors.

DREW.

Have you come in to get a wrap?

MISS MILLS.

I'm not sure. Do you ever suffer from melancholia?

DREW.

Sometimes.

MISS MILLS.

[*Sighing.*] So do I. [*She sits down forlornly.*] I have it now.

DREW.

[*Cheerfully.*] You ought not to know anything of melancholia yet.

MISS MILLS.

I know the world thinks I am blithe as a bird—singing from morn till eve—but if they only knew! I am often very, very unhappy.

DREW.

What do you ever want that you don't have?

MISS MILLS.

The trouble is so often, I don't know what I want.

DREW.

Then, depend upon it, you want loving.

MISS MILLS.

I dare say that's it.

DREW.

He'll come along some day.

MISS MILLS.

[*A little piqued.*] It's not for want of chances that I'm not engaged.

DREW.

Never been in love?

MISS MILLS.

[*Thoughtfully.*] I can't be sure how much one ought to be in love—to be in love.

DREW.

Then you never have.

MISS MILLS.

Not properly. And yet I feel if some strong man strode up and said "You *shall!*" I might.

DREW.

He's too timid. Never tells you straight what he means—isn't that it?

MISS MILLS.

[*In a panic.*] Oh, I don't know. Don't ask me. One has to be so careful not to let one's feelings run away with one if one has money.

DREW.

Oh, the six thousand pounds.

MISS MILLS.

[*Haughtily.*] Six thousand pounds is not a pittance.

DREW.

But he wouldn't want to marry you for *that.*

MISS MILLS.

You don't seem to recognize the difficulty of my position. If a girl is pretty and penniless she knows she is being wooed for herself, and if she is rich and plain she knows it must be for her money—but with me—it might so well be either.

DREW.

[*Laughing.*] But what's-his-name is very well off.

MISS MILLS.

[*Interested.*] Oh, is he? I didn't know that.

DREW.

And a good fellow from stem to stern.

MISS MILLS.

Nothing like having a good opinion of yourself.

DREW.

He didn't say it, *I* say it. And I'll say more, I'll say —— [WHITE *enters.*] Oh, now, speak of the devil ——

[DREW *laughs and goes out abruptly.*
MISS MILLS *turns and sees* WHITE.

MISS MILLS.

Is there madness in your family?

WHITE.

My dear Miss Mills!

MISS MILLS.

Your cousin has just been behaving so strangely.

WHITE.

[*Coming quickly to her.*] Has he been making love to you?

MISS MILLS.

Anything but.

WHITE.

Of course I'm very fond of Hal, but I don't think the Navy is good to marry into.

MISS MILLS.

I don't think it's quite safe, but it must be very nice to have a husband who keeps going away on voyages and coming home for honeymoons.

WHITE.

[*Sitting beside her.*] But how much nicer a perpetual honeymoon in a snug little cottage—like mine.

MISS MILLS.

[*Ignoring this.*] Officers' wives can get to very good parties.

WHITE.

No better than I can.

MISS MILLS.

I do so like those buttons they wear.

WHITE.

[*Annoyed.*] It's no use hankering after Hal's buttons. He's a hopeless case at present.

MISS MILLS.

[*Dismayed.*] Has he got a wife?

WHITE.

No, no, but—it's a very delicate matter to speak of. [*He first looks off from the window to make sure he is not overheard.*] I suppose you can see why he comes to this house so often?

MISS MILLS.

[*Coyly.*] I suppose I can.

WHITE.

[*Exasperated.*] Oh, you are off on a wrong scent altogether. He doesn't come to see *you.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Dismayed.*] Eh? [*Recovering herself.*] I never supposed he did. I don't see why you think you need tell me that. As if I ever suggested he comes to see *me.*

WHITE.

[*Glancing toward the window before he lowers his voice.*] He comes to see Mrs. Moxon.

MISS MILLS.

[*After a moment's panic.*] Of course, I saw that.

WHITE.

I'm not saying a word against Mrs. Moxon. I am sure she is all she should be, and even more.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, those quiet women!

WHITE.

It puts me in such a position. I introduced him.

MISS MILLS.

I wonder if her husband knows?

WHITE.

[*Irritated.*] He'd be the last to see, the great dull thing!

MISS MILLS.

I wonder if she knows herself?

WHITE.

Of course she does. Haven't you noticed the change? The last month has transformed her.

MISS MILLS.

Oh! I begin to see it all. Those new clothes. And I thought she was taking my advice.

WHITE.

The first day he came—before ever he saw her—he said he was going to make love to her—just to see if he could. *I* said he couldn't. That set his back up. And this is the result.

MISS MILLS.

I wonder if he means it now?

WHITE.

I'm hanged if I know. If he doesn't, we must stop it. And if he does—we *must* stop it.

MISS MILLS.

[*Thoughtfully.*] For the present, we must just watch and listen. In a case of this sort, I

should even consider it right to intercept letters and listen at keyholes.

WHITE.

Oh, I say!

[*Enter* MRS. MOXON. *She wears a scarf over her shoulders.*

MRS. MOXON.

I thought you were all outside.

WHITE.

Mr. Moxon is there.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh! [*She moves toward the window.*

MISS MILLS.

And Captain Drew.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Stopping.*] Oh!

[MISS MILLS *and* WHITE *exchange meaning glances.* MOXON *comes in.*

MOXON.

I must be off now. I'm going to play bridge at the Fishers'.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Turning impulsively to* MOXON.] George, please stay at home.

MOXON.

Why? What's the matter?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Faltering.*] Nothing; but I'd rather you stayed.

MOXON.

But they expect me. We arranged the game yesterday.

MRS. MOXON.

Couldn't you send them word?

MOXON.

It's too late now. I told Hassell to call for me. He'll be here directly.

MRS. MOXON.

Then you can send word by him.

MOXON.

But what excuse can I make? I can't say I'm ill, because he'll be able to see for himself that I'm not.

MRS. MOXON.

No, you can't say that. It would be untrue. [*Impulsively.*] Wouldn't it be enough to say that your wife begged you to remain?

MOXON.

[*Laughing.*] They *would* think I was on leading strings.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Earnestly.*] Would that matter for once?

MOXON.

Now, don't persist, my dear. I can't go and break an important engagement because you take a sudden fancy to have me stay at home. [*Amiably.*] I'll stay at home to-morrow.

MRS. MOXON.

To-morrow won't do!

MOXON.

[*In mild surprise.*] Aren't you well, Martha?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Trying to speak lightly to disguise her agitation.*] Oh, yes, thank you, I feel particularly well. [*She moves toward the window.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Anxiously.*] Are you going out, Martha?

MRS. MOXON.

Yes. [*She stays at the window and says uncertainly.*] No, I don't know. [*Then she sees they are all looking at her.*] Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do.

[*She goes quickly right across the room and out of the door.*

MISS MILLS.

[*To* MOXON.] You ought to stay.

MOXON.

When I want your advice I shall ask for it.

MISS MILLS.

Please don't forget you are speaking to a guest. [*To* WHITE.] Mr. White, you will find Captain Drew on the terrace.

WHITE.

[*Taking her hint.*] Oh, yes, thank you.
[*Exit* WHITE.

MISS MILLS.

What a change there is in Martha!

MOXON.

[*Puzzled.*] Change? What change?

MISS MILLS.

She seems so much younger and brighter.

MOXON.

Does she? I hadn't noticed any difference.

MISS MILLS.

Don't you think she looks better?

MOXON.

She always looks about the same.

MISS MILLS.

Have you noticed her clothes?

MOXON.

Not particularly.

MISS MILLS.

[*Exasperated.*] Then you ought to have done so. If she doesn't wear pretty clothes for you, she wears them for some one else.

MOXON.

[*Vaguely.*] Who?

MISS MILLS.

Some one doesn't come somewhere for nothing.

MOXON.

I don't know what you mean.

MISS MILLS.

I should think Captain Drew makes a great many conquests.

MOXON.

Charming fellow, isn't he?

MISS MILLS.

I suppose you've no idea what a temptation it is to some of us—after we've had a few suc-

cesses—to go flirting about with every one—[*pointedly, as she goes toward him*] single *or* married.

MOXON.

[*Startled.*] Oh! [*He looks at* MISS MILLS, *then lays his hand kindly on her shoulder.*] My dear young lady, I knew your father well, and I have the greatest respect for your mother—don't try anything of that sort on with *me.*

MISS MILLS.

You! I flirt with you! [*She laughs.*] That would be exhilarating—a flirtation with you. Oh, no, thank you, I'd rather be excused.

MOXON.

Then do say what you're driving at.

MISS MILLS.

It's like teaching any one the A. B. C. Can't you see that Captain Drew and Martha -

MOXON.

What! You mean to suggest he comes here to—— [*Dismissing the idea.*] Oh, it's—it's absurd!

MISS MILLS.

It's not at all absurd. Martha looks very nice . . . when she's dressed up.

MOXON.

But I thought *you* were the attraction.

MISS MILLS.

[*Sadly.*] So did I!

MOXON.

If I had any suspicion that my wife ——

MISS MILLS.

[*Rather uneasy at what she has done.*] I am sure Martha will never do anything she shouldn't. She may be fond of him, but she has dignity and self-control—and so has he. It's not as if they were two French people. [*There is a movement of impatience from* MOXON.] I only told you this to put you on your guard! So that you would stay at home and be nice to her instead of prancing out with that Hassell, whom you've suddenly become so fond of—just out of opposition to all of us. But, of course, you'll take it all wrong and be nastier than ever.

MOXON.

I don't believe there's anything in what you say. You've been reading novels. You mustn't come here putting these notions into our heads. I don't like it. I'm afraid you have a nasty mind.

MISS MILLS.

[*Indignantly.*] Oh, how unjust! How ungrateful! How like you!

[*Enter the* MAID.

MAID.

Mr. Chester Hassell.

MISS MILLS.

Oh—oh!

[MISS MILLS *runs out into the garden.* *Enter* HASSELL. *The* MAID *goes.*

HASSELL.

Are you ready, Moxon?

MOXON.

Good-evening, Hassell. I can't go to the Fishers' with you.

HASSELL.

But, my dear Moxon, we can't have a game if you don't come.

MOXON.

That's a pity—sit down.

HASSELL.

It's so late to cry off now—unless you have some very special reason.

MOXON.

I have no reason at all—only my wife asked me to stay with her.

HASSELL.

I hope Mrs. Moxon is well?

MOXON.

She says she feels particularly well. I don't know what it's all about. I suppose she must have hysteria.

HASSELL.

If you can't come I must go and hunt up somebody else.

MOXON.

One moment. On the other hand, if I stay at home, Miss Mills will think I am taking her advice, so I *will* come to the Fishers' with you.

HASSELL.

Good!

MOXON.

I'm very much annoyed with Miss Mills.

HASSELL.

Oh!

MOXON.

Now, Hassell, you know the kind of people we are.

HASSELL.

Yes. Why? Aren't you?

MOXON.

Of course we are. I have no wish to hold my household up as a model but I think I may say it is a very fair example of a well conducted English home—isn't it?

HASSELL.

Certainly.

MOXON.

Well, Miss Mills has had the impertinence to tell me, to my face, that my wife is carrying on a flirtation with ——

[MISS MILLS *appears at the window.*

MISS MILLS.

I didn't. I only told you to look out.

HASSELL.

Good-evening, Miss Mills.

MISS MILLS.

Please understand, Mr. Hassell, that you and I are not on speaking terms.

[MISS MILLS *disappears from the window.* HASSELL *smiles.* MOXON *closes the window.*

MOXON.

She won't do that again in a hurry.

[*At the same time* MISS MILLS *reopens the window and disappears.*

HASSELL.

You were saying before we were interrupted —she said your wife was carrying on a flirtation with—[*as if he were trying to remember a name*] who was it?

MOXON.

He shall be nameless.

HASSELL.

Oh—Captain Drew, wasn't it?

MOXON.

Yes. But he shall be nameless. I ought not to have mentioned this to you, but I was so annoyed. To think of any one daring even to hint at such a thing in connection with Mrs. Moxon.

HASSELL.

I know how you feel. You had to tell some one to relieve your feelings.

MOXON.

Exactly. I see you understand me.

HASSELL.

Perfectly.

MOXON.

You won't let this go any further.

HASSELL.

Certainly not. You can trust me.

MOXON.

Thanks, Hassell. I'm sure you are my friend.
[*He offers* HASSELL *his hand.*

HASSELL.

[*Grasping it.*] Indeed I am.

MOXON.

And I'm yours.

HASSELL.

Thanks. Oh, by the way—I don't like to ask you. Only—some money—I was expecting hasn't turned up. It will, of course—but I wonder if you could help me out meanwhile.

MOXON.

I should be delighted—only at present my money is all so tied up. Try Fisher.

HASSELL.

I did. His was tied up, too.

MOXON.

How unfortunate. Just when you want it, too. [*Taking* HASSELL'S *arm.*] Come along, old fellow, we must be off. And you might win a lot at bridge.

HASSELL.

Yes, about three and six pence.

MOXON.

Well, that's a beginning. Rome wasn't built in a day.

[*Exit* HASSELL *and* MOXON. MISS MILLS *peeps cautiously through the window, before she advances into the room beckoning to* WHITE *who follows her.*

MISS MILLS.

There! You heard everything.

WHITE.

That's nothing new. He's always trying to borrow money, only he never pays it back—so no one will lend him any more.

MISS MILLS.

I don't mean the money part. But fancy him telling that odious Mr. Hassell, of all people, what we think about Captain Drew and Martha.

WHITE.

[*Vaguely.*] Yes.

MISS MILLS.

You don't seem to see the gravity of it. Mr. Hassell is the most vindictive creature. He'll make up a scandal about them if he can. He hates them so.

WHITE.

Why?

MISS MILLS.

Ever since they advised me not to have him.

WHITE.

What!

MISS MILLS.

[*Smiling indulgently.*] I shouldn't have had him anyway. [*Touching him on the arm.*] I don't like such dark men. [WHITE *smiles and strokes his fair moustache.*] But when I refused him he said if he ever found out anything

against Captain Drew or Martha it would be the worse for them. Those were his very words: "It will be the worse for them."

WHITE.

I don't think you need have let him propose to you.

MISS MILLS.

How was I to prevent it? And then if he didn't go and tell Lucy Fisher that I as good as proposed to him. Oh! [WHITE *laughs.* MISS MILLS *turns to him indignantly.*] Mr. White, I'm surprised.

WHITE.

[*Confused.*] I beg your pardon.

MISS MILLS.

[*Distantly.*] I'm not sure that I shall grant it.

WHITE.

Well, now, what are we to do about Mrs. Moxon and Hal?

MISS MILLS.

It's all your fault for bringing him here.

WHITE.

It doesn't help us much to say it's my fault.

MISS MILLS.

You made the muddle, so you must get them out.

WHITE.

But I don't know how unless you help me.

MISS MILLS.

I'm not sure that it would be quite nice for me to interfere. I'm not married.

WHITE.

You could be married if you would. [*Leaning over her he says sentimentally.*] Izzy!

MISS MILLS.

What a tactless opportunity to take.

WHITE.

Very well, then. You leave everything to me?

MISS MILLS.

Certainly not. You'll only go and make things worse. You must have a serious talk with Captain Drew. Call him in here. You'll be able to watch the workings of his face better by this light.

WHITE.

[*Despondently.*] He won't listen to me.

MISS MILLS.

You must do your best. I'll go and have a few womanly words with Martha. [*Confidently.*] *She'll* listen to *me.* I'm thoroughly worked up over this. [*Exit* MISS MILLS.

WHITE.

[*Despondently.*] Now for it. [*He goes to the window and calls.*] Hal! [MRS. MOXON *is heard singing Tosti's "Good-bye." After a short interval* WHITE *calls again.*] Hal!

[*Enter* DREW *from the garden.*

DREW.

Well, what is it? I say—I've just thought of such a funny yarn. It'll make you scream.

WHITE.

I don't wish to scream at present, thank you.

DREW.

[*Hearing the song, he motions* WHITE *to be silent.*] Sh——! Mrs. Moxon is singing.

[*He listens.*

WHITE.

I want to speak to you.

DREW.

Not while she sings.

[WHITE *makes a circle toward the door and stands with his back to it facing*

DREW *in order to prevent him leaving. They stand so till the song is finished.*

DREW.

Shall we join them ?

WHITE.

Not till I've spoken.

DREW.

Well, what is it? Am I to be court-martialed ?

WHITE.

Are you never serious ?

DREW.

Oh, often ; but, fortunately, *you* can always make me laugh.

WHITE.

She never used to sing before *you* came.

DREW.

Because no one cared to hear her. You'll get lumbago if you stand there.

[*He makes a move as if he were going back into the garden.*

WHITE.

Now, now, now !

[WHITE *goes quickly to the window and stands as he did at the door.*

DREW.

Oh, don't keep tacking about like that. Sit down and say what you want to.

[*He sits down and takes out a cigarette.*

WHITE.

You mayn't smoke in here.

DREW.

Yes, I may. I've had special leave.

WHITE.

She couldn't bear the smell of smoke before. Now, that shows you.

DREW.

[*Lighting his cigarette.*] What does it show me?

WHITE.

I think it's gone far enough.

DREW.

How are you getting on with Izzy?

WHITE.

I'm not going to be put off that way. I think it's time you tell Mrs. Moxon you are not serious.

DREW.

I wish you wouldn't be so meddlesome.

WHITE.

I must be meddlesome. Consider my responsibilities. I brought you here. When you said you were going to make love to Mrs. Moxon I thought you were only chaffing.

DREW.

So I was.

WHITE.

It's rather too bad to keep on fooling her.

DREW.

[*Indignantly.*] I'm *not* fooling her.

WHITE.

That makes it far worse.

DREW.

You don't understand, and I can't explain. It's too complicated. I mean—it's quite simple—but I'm not answerable to you. There are some things a man can't discuss. [*He walks to and fro in the room before he adds.*] I suppose if I leave it at that—you'll go and think things.

WHITE.

What would you think yourself if you saw two people always together, very intimate and confidential, and one of them was *you?*

DREW.

I should think nothing disrespectful if the other one was Mrs. Moxon. She's the best woman in the world and she needs no defence from me. You gave me quite a wrong idea of her the first time I came—or I shouldn't have talked all that rubbish about making up to her. I thought she was going to be one of those precise, chilly-fingered English women, stiff with conceit and whalebone—you know the kind. I hadn't talked to her for ten minutes before I found out she was as straight and simple as a child, at first rather shy and mistrustful, but after we made friends, so confiding. As she revealed herself, unconsciously, my heart went out to her. I was completely charmed and conquered. No woman has ever appealed to me as she does. I want to be always with her. I can't rest when I'm away. In the morning I can scarcely wait till it's decently late to come here. I'm happier if I've made her smile than if I were made an admiral. But you needn't be afraid, for you see, her simplicity disarms me, and her confidence puts me on my honour.

WHITE.

[*Thoughtfully.*] But, after all, she is a woman, and you are a man.

DREW.

You are full of useful information.

WHITE.

If you want *my* opinion.

DREW.

Thank you, I don't.

WHITE.

I think you ought to go away.

DREW.

I knew that was coming. It's what any one would say on the spur of the moment. It was my own first impulse—when I began to recognize where I was. Oh, you needn't think I haven't walked up and down and round and round that studio of yours, arguing with myself till my own head went round and round too. At first I thought, "This won't do, this is all wrong." Then I thought, "Why, why?" Love need not be guilty. It's only because I've debased it so often that I think it is something to be ashamed of. Why must I crush the strongest and best emotion I ever felt? Don't we spend our lives searching out sympathetic companions? And aren't we always having disappointments and dropping people because they won't do? Well, if at last I have found some one who will do—some one who helps me to be my best self, some one whom I can help—why on earth should I leave her?

WHITE.

Because she's married.

DREW.

She's not happy with her husband.

WHITE.

How do you know?

DREW.

How could any one be happy with Moxon?

WHITE.

He's selfish and tiresome, but he's not bad natured.

DREW.

[*Vehemently.*] He humiliates her, snubs her whenever she speaks. Sometimes when I hear him, knowing how sensitive she is, I can scarcely keep still. It's like seeing her struck. And I can't do anything.

WHITE.

I am so afraid you *will* do something some time.

DREW.

It would only get *her* into trouble.

WHITE.

I think you magnify Mrs. Moxon's unhappiness. When a woman has been married as long as she has, I don't suppose she knows if she is happy or not. She's got so used to it.

DREW.

[*Ironically.*] That's such a comforting thought for men. Don't let us distress ourselves thinking how many women suffer in silence. Let's make up our minds that they like it.

WHITE.

Even if Moxon is not as nice to her as he might be, I don't see that *you* can do anything.

DREW.

I can distract her. I can show her that some one finds her charming. And while I can do the smallest thing to vary the monotony of her life, I stay.

WHITE.

But you can't stay here forever.

DREW.

No, till I get my orders.

WHITE.

The *chief* danger isn't you or people gossiping, it's —— [*He is abruptly silent.*

DREW.

What?

WHITE.

I don't know if it's safe to tell you.

DREW.

[*Impatiently.*] Go on.

WHITE.

[*Hesitating, then blurting out.*] She can't help showing she's in love with *you.*

[*There is a silence during which* DREW *looks very grave.*

DREW.

Has any one spoken of this?

WHITE.

Yes.

DREW.

Who?

WHITE.

[*Guiltily.*] *I* did—to Miss Mills.

DREW.

I think you might have kept quiet.

WHITE.

But I had to enlighten her.

DREW.

Eh?

WHITE.

She was under the impression that you came here so often to see *her*, so I told her, and she told Moxon, and Moxon told Hassell, and -

DREW.

[*Angrily.*] So you are all spying and whispering, putting an evil construction on every innocent word and look. It's monstrous. [*Before he speaks to* WHITE *again, he paces up and down the room.*] When did you begin talking about this?

WHITE.

Only this evening. There's no harm done yet.

DREW.

But they are all on the lookout. Even as I say "Good-night," they'll think she lets me hold her hand a second longer than she need. They'll see a guilty meaning if she looks at me, or if she looks away. I won't have her watched and pointed at. I'll protect her from that. How? You've made it impossible for me to behave towards her in any way. And they saw in my romance only another vulgar intrigue. [*He leans on mantelshelf in deep*

thought before he continues quietly.] There's only one way now to save her from insult. I must go away. It does seem like deserting her. I must go at once. I'll leave to-morrow. I'll say "Good-bye" to Mrs. Moxon now. [*He moves to the door.* MRS. MOXON *is heard again singing Tosti's "Good-bye."* DREW *stops when he hears her with his hand on the door handle.*] No, not now. I think it will be better to come up in the morning. I'm going home this way.

[*He returns and makes for the window.*

WHITE.

All right. I'll go and get our hats.

[*Exit* WHITE. *As he leaves the door open the song is heard more distinctly.*

DREW.

[*Listening.*] Good-bye, good-bye.

[*Exit* DREW. WHITE *re-enters with a hat in each hand.*

WHITE.

Hullo! Has he gone already?

[*He follows* DREW. *Enter* MISS MILLS *hurriedly.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Calling.*] Mr. White!

WHITE.

[*Turning.*] Oh, I say, we are going to cut home. I've persuaded him to go away to-morrow.

MISS MILLS.

Now I didn't think you had it in you.

WHITE.

How did you succeed with Mrs. Moxon?

MISS MILLS.

Well, of course, women are much harder to deal with than men. You had a very simple job. You only had to talk a man over, while I——

WHITE.

Had no success at all. Tell Mrs. Moxon that Hal has to join his ship to-morrow. Tell her kindly.

MISS MILLS.

Well, really, Mr. White, I don't think it's your place to dictate to me.

WHITE.

Tell her the way you think best.

MISS MILLS.

I've tried woman to woman. That's no good. I know what I'll do, I'll make light of everything and laugh it all off.

WHITE.

Splendid idea. I must hurry after Hal. Good-night.

[*Exit* WHITE *into the garden.* MRS. MOXON *comes in by the door.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Assuming unnatural cheerfulness.*] Well, Martha, they've gone.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Slightly surprised.*] Gone. Without saying good-night?

MISS MILLS.

[*By the window.*] Yes, there they are, crossing the field. [MRS. MOXON *goes and also looks off.*] We shall know when they get home by the light in the studio window.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes, I always know when Captain Drew is at home by that light among the trees.

MISS MILLS.

I wonder he isn't afraid to sleep down there by himself. I should be.

MRS. MOXON.

But he's so brave.

MISS MILLS.

[*Breaking into a ringing laugh.*] Such a good joke, Martha. It's against myself, too. You know I thought Captain Drew came here so often to see me.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, did you, dear? It never struck me so.

MISS MILLS.

I know better now. Oh, I can take a joke against myself in very good part. [*She stops her laughing to say.*] Now some people were under the impression that he came to see *you.*

MRS. MOXON.

[*Nervously.*] Oh, well—I suppose he comes to see all of us.

MISS MILLS.

Sit down and let me tell you. [MRS. MOXON *does so.* MISS MILLS *resumes her unnaturally cheerful manner.*] You know that man deserves whipping. It seems he made a wager with Mr. White that he could make you fall in love with him.

MRS. MOXON.

I can't believe Captain Drew would do such a thing.

MISS MILLS.

But Mr. White himself told me, and you know sailors are notorious for making love to all the women they meet.

MRS. MOXON.

I don't think *he* is like that.

MISS MILLS.

I expect he's like all the others, if one doesn't see him through rose-colored spectacles. *I* wouldn't trust a man with such taking manners.

MRS. MOXON.

He is always so merry, but not unkind. It would be cruel to pay court to a woman to ridicule her.

MISS MILLS.

Well, of course, Martha, you are not a young girl.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Hastily.*] No, no! I was not thinking of myself.

MISS MILLS.

I'm glad he didn't win the wager.

MRS. MOXON.

That was fortunate, wasn't it? Perhaps if I had been a weaker woman ——

[*Her voice breaks; she looks away.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Watching her anxiously, but trying to speak gaily.*] It doesn't matter now, anyway, because he's gone away.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Receiving this intelligence with a sudden shock at her heart.*] Gone away!

MISS MILLS.

[*Still thinking it best to laugh.*] Yes, to join his ship.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Showing her emotion, she goes quickly to* MISS MILLS *and seizes hold of her.*] Child, child, stop laughing! Tell me! Will he never come back?

MISS MILLS.

[*Alarmed.*] Martha!

MRS. MOXON.

[*Leaving hold of* MISS MILLS, *and saying in very measured tones.*] It's nothing. I was taken by surprise, that's all. You'd better say good-night to me now.

MISS MILLS.

Good-night.

[*She goes out of the room quietly and quickly.*

MRS. MOXON.

I can't bear it. [*She clenches her hands together and holds them to her mouth to prevent her sobs being heard; stretches her arms toward the house where she knows he is and says passionately.*] Come back and tell me it's not true. Tell me, tell me! [*She pauses, drops her arms, and says in a different tone.*] Tell me—— [*Again she is silent a moment, then says with decision.*] I must know. [*Snatching up her scarf she goes out quickly through the window.*] I must know.

[*The curtain falls when she moves to the window.*

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE.—*The studio in* WHITE'S *garden. It is a high square room with a door opening into the garden. A curtained entrance leads to the bedroom. There are no easels or signs of a painter's work, as the room is not now used as a studio. In the middle is a settee, by it a small writing-desk. There is a table with a lamp standing on it, a syphon of soda water, a decanter of whiskey, a jug of water, and tumblers on a tray. Mats and rugs on the floor and other furniture make the place both well furnished and comfortable.*

As the curtain rises DREW *and* WHITE *enter dressed as in the previous act.*

WHITE.

I'll just have one drink with you before I turn in. [*He mixes whiskies while* DREW *sits disconsolately on the settee; he glances once or twice at* DREW *before he says.*] You'll feel better when you get right away. You ought to go to some place where there's plenty of dancing and fun, and you'll soon be yourself again.

DREW.

Please don't try to cheer me up. It's the one thing I couldn't stand just now.

WHITE.

Have you thought where you'll go to-morrow?

DREW.

I'll take a train somewhere.

WHITE.

Why not have a few days in London?

DREW.

What's the use? The bounce has gone out of everything.

WHITE.

Well, here.

[*He gives* DREW *a tumbler of whiskey and soda.*

DREW.

[*Taking it mechanically.*] I suppose there isn't a train anywhere to-night?

WHITE.

No, the last one left at ten fifteen. It's nearly eleven now.

DREW.

Is that all? Think of the hours and hours till to-morrow. I never could stand waiting.

I always had to be doing something. Now that I've made up my mind to go, I want to go—not that there's anywhere to go to. I wish they'd have a war and send me out to get shot. [*He holds up his glass.*] Chin chin.

[*They both drink.*

WHITE.

At any rate you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you did the right thing.

DREW.

It's the only thing to do—to go away and leave her. I've known that for some time, but I wouldn't own up, even to myself. Somehow, the last few days, we've had less to say to each other. I couldn't go on saying ordinary things, when it was always on the tip of my tongue to tell her one thing. And it's the silences that are so dangerous. All the self-control of weeks may be undone in a moment, and it isn't the long self-control that goes to your credit then. It's the one moment of weakness that goes to your discredit. Oh, well, it does no good to talk about it. [*He commences to pack his things in a dress-suit case.*] I'd better get my gear together.

WHITE.

Would you like some one to come and do your packing?

DREW.

No, thanks. It may do me good to get in a bad temper, and I'm sure to do that if I do my own packing.

WHITE.

Will you be all right if I leave you ?

DREW.

Oh, yes. Your man generally comes later on to see if I want anything.

WHITE.

Then I'll say good-night.

DREW.

Good-night.

WHITE.

[*Up at the door he says.*] Will you have the door left open ?

DREW.

Yes, thanks. I like the air. Go to your bunk and dream of Izzy.

WHITE.

I've dreamed of her three nights running.

[*Exit* WHITE. DREW *takes the rose from his buttonhole and holds it in his hand.*

DREW.

[*Tenderly.*] Poor lady!

[*He fills a tumbler and places the rose carefully in water. Then he hums the refrain of Tosti's "Good-bye" as he begins putting clothes into the suit-case.* MRS. MOXON *appears in the doorway and stands on the threshold, watching him.* DREW *turns and sees her. He stands still.*

MRS. MOXON.

You are packing, I see.

DREW.

I find I must leave here to-morrow.

MRS. MOXON.

So I have heard.

DREW.

I meant to come up and say "good-bye" to you in the morning.

MRS. MOXON.

I did not hear that.

DREW.

I'm so sorry to go, but, of course, one can't be away on leave all the time.

MRS. MOXON.

I quite understand.

DREW.

Won't you sit down?

MRS. MOXON.

No, I mustn't stay. It was so oppressive in the house I stepped on to the terrace. I could see your light through the trees, and it's only across two fields ——

DREW.

[*Watching her intently.*] You want to tell me something.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Irresolutely.*] No. Don't let me interrupt your packing.

DREW.

I'm not sure that I shall pack now.

[*He closes his suit-case, then he goes to the door and shuts it. Her eyes fall on the rose in the tumbler. She exclaims with almost childish pleasure.*

MRS. MOXON.

You *did* put my rose in water? [*She stands looking at the rose and smiling a moment or so, then she turns and scrutinizes the room.*] So this is where you sit of an evening. I often wondered how it looked.

DREW.

And I have so often imagined you coming in at the door and moving about the place that now I hardly know if I'm not dreaming.

MRS. MOXON.

I *did* come to tell you something—to ask you something.

DREW.

What?

MRS. MOXON.

[*After a short pause and awkwardly.*] Have you been making fun of me all this while?

DREW.

No, no. It's not true.

MRS. MOXON.

I couldn't quite believe it of you, but they told me—something about a wager between you and Mr. White.

DREW.

I'll tell you everything.

MRS. MOXON.

I want the truth.

DREW.

[*With an effort.*] Before I saw you—I said —— [*He stops, embarrassed.*

MRS. MOXON.

Yes?

DREW.

I'm so afraid you won't understand me.

MRS. MOXON.

I shall try.

DREW.

I never knew a really good woman very well—till now. You see, in the Navy we go out into the world so soon. We get our ideals knocked on the head in no time. And if we are stationed abroad for a long while, as I was, we get to know a lot of second-rate people who make a great deal of us. It's all done out of kindness, but the trouble is, we think that's life, we think those are real people, and it lowers our standard—especially our standard of women.

MRS. MOXON.

Ah!

DREW.

I was like that when I came here, and I told Ernest—I think I said I was going to try and make an impression on you.

MRS. MOXON.

Then it *is* true?

DREW.

It was before I knew you. I'd never seen you. It does make a difference, doesn't it? If I said that before or after I knew you?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Doubtfully.*] Yes—oh, yes. I'm glad you pointed that out to me.

DREW.

Of course, when I knew you, it was different. I realized how different that very first day. And ever since—day by day, while we've been together. As I've looked deeper and deeper into your mind and into your heart, I've been filled with reverence for your unselfishness, your patience, and your devotion. I've seen my ideal of a woman. The woman I would like my wife to have been—but it's too late now. [*He moves away a little.*] I think I ought to go away from here.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Nervously.*] I think so. I think so.

DREW.

I shall remember this past month as the happiest time of my whole life.

MRS. MOXON.

[*Wistfully.*] A pleasant holiday?

DREW.

Something much more real than that. A good influence that will stay with me forever.

MRS. MOXON.

I shan't feel ashamed any more. It hurt me to think how much I had done to try and please you, and then to be told you were only making fun of me. But that's all over now. I must go back. [*She gives him her hand.*] Good-bye, and thank you.

DREW.

[*Taking her hand and saying tenderly.*] The best I can wish you is that you'll forget me.

MRS. MOXON.

I have told you I shall never forget you.

DREW.

Will you be just as content after I'm gone as you were before I came?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Withdrawing her hand.*] I was dead before you came. You made me live.

DREW.

It is better to live, even if one suffers.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, yes. You see, I was never one to lead. I could always feel a great deal more than I could say, and I don't think my husband was ever of opinion that a wife should be a companion. Sometimes I have wondered if he wouldn't be as happy with any one else who looked after him as well as I did. He was always kind to me—at least, he was never unkind—only he forgets. He doesn't see how a woman prizes a little notice taken of her now and then, and she can't ask for it. Perhaps it's vain to want attention, but so very little makes us happy. And I have never had it in all my life—till now. Oh, the first time you sent me flowers! I cried so. And when I had a headache one day and kept my room, and you came early the next morning to see if I was better. Do you remember? It is all these pretty attentions you have paid me that have made me live again. That you should think me worth it, not because I am useful, but as a woman! I'm so grateful to you, so grateful.

DREW.

[*Brokenly.*] Don't thank me, please don't. It's nothing I've done for you. It's nothing I *can* do, and I want to do so much ——

MRS. MOXON.

[*Tears rolling down her cheeks.*] Dear friend, dear friend. I know it's very hard to say good-bye, but we always knew this had to come.

DREW.

It breaks my heart to leave you, dear, to leave you.

MRS. MOXON.

I shall miss you. I shall miss you dreadfully.

DREW.

[*Anxiously.*] Do you dread going back?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Simply.*] My life is there.

DREW.

If only we had met in time.

MRS. MOXON.

It's best as it is. Often in the last few days I have thought—suppose you and I had met long ago, and had become engaged and married, it wouldn't have been wise. I should be such a quiet mouse among your gay friends—it's best as it is. Try to think that. And now, good-night, dear friend.

DREW.

Good-bye, my dear, dear lady. [*He draws her gently to him, folds her tenderly in his arms, and kisses her forehead. She yields naturally to his embrace. There are two knocks on the door. They separate.* DREW, *assuringly, and in a low tone.*] It's only the servant come to see if I want anything. Stand aside while I speak to him. It's all right, it's all right.

[*She stands out of sight of the door, which* DREW *opens.* HASSELL *is there. He has been drinking, so that his manner is blustering; but he has all his wits about him.*

HASSELL.

Good-evening, Drew.

DREW.

[*Taken by surprise.*] Hullo! [HASSELL *is about to enter.* DREW, *quickly.*] I can't ask you in.

HASSELL.

Oh! Why not?

DREW.

To tell you the truth, Hassell, I don't care to have you here.

HASSELL.

Am I disturbing a pleasant little interview?

DREW.

Not at all, but you must have noticed that ever since I came here I've avoided meeting you.

HASSELL.

Oh, yes; I've noticed it. I've not dropped in just in a friendly way. I shouldn't come here unless I had something very important to tell you.

DREW.

It's too late now. You can come and see me in the morning.

[*He tries to shut the door on* HASSELL.

HASSELL.

[*Holding the door to prevent this.*] What I have to say won't keep till morning.

DREW.

Then say it here.

HASSELL.

It must be said behind closed doors. Too many trees and bushes about. Some one might be listening.

DREW.

What nonsense!

HASSELL.

I suppose there's nobody in there who could overhear us?

DREW.

Nobody. [*He motions* MRS. MOXON *to leave.*

HASSELL.

Then we may as well go in.

[*He attempts to enter, as* MRS. MOXON *vanishes behind the curtains.*

DREW.

[*Losing his temper.*] Look here, Hassell, I won't have you forcing your way in like this.

HASSELL.

Then there *is* some one there.

DREW.

No, but——

HASSELL.

It wouldn't be the first time you were caught with a woman. [*Laughing.*] Don't you remember that night in Hong Kong?

DREW.

I don't want to have to turn you out.

HASSELL.

If you try anything of that sort on, do you know what I shall do? I shall raise such a shout that Ernest White and all his servants will come running to see what the row is. [*He faces* DREW *defiantly.*] Now, then, may I come in?

DREW.

No.

HASSELL.

[*Looking up the garden.*] I can see the light in White's bedroom window. He'd easily hear me if I called.

[*He puts his hands to his mouth as if about to shout.*

DREW.

Stop! I don't want a brawl here. [*He glances round to see if* MRS. MOXON *is out of sight.*] Say what you want to—quickly.

[*He moves back into the room.*

HASSELL.

We must have the door closed. [*He comes in.*] I suppose I may sit down?

DREW.

Sit here.

HASSELL.

No, thanks, I'll sit here. [*He sits facing the curtains, and then presses his hand to his brow.*] Oh, dear, I've got such a head.

DREW.

[*Eagerly.*] Have a drink.

[*He fetches a tumbler and the whiskey decanter.*

HASSELL.

Thanks, I don't mind. [DREW *fills the tumbler half full of whiskey.* HASSELL *watches him.*] Steady! [*He takes the tumbler from* DREW.] I may be a bit on, but I've still got my wits about me. [*He pours some of the whiskey on the floor.*] Fill it up, please. [DREW *fills the tumbler up with water.*] Rather nice quarters you've got here.

DREW.

[*Curtly.*] Yes, they are all right.

HASSELL.

Just this and —— [*Indicating the curtains.*] I suppose that's your bedroom?

DREW.

Yes, but—your business, please.

HASSELL.

Yes. I've been playing bridge at the Fishers' this evening, and ——

[*He picks up the tumbler with the rose in it and smells the rose.*

DREW.

[*Indignantly.*] Don't touch that.

[*He snatches the tumbler from* HASSELL.

HASSELL.

[*Surprised.*] All right.

DREW.

Now, then, what do you want to say?

HASSELL.

I've been playing bridge at the Fishers' ——

DREW.

You've said that once.

HASSELL.

Have a bit of patience. Moxon was there.

DREW.

[*Affecting indifference.*] Well?

HASSELL.

Well, one time when I was dummy I wandered into the hall; the drawing-room door was

open, and I overheard part of a conversation between Lucy Fisher and a friend of hers. You know she's a bit of a scandalmonger, Lucy Fisher is.

DREW.

I scarcely know her.

HASSELL.

She was telling her friend about you and Mrs. Moxon. Said you were carrying on a desperate flirtation, and that Moxon was being fooled.

DREW.

[*Trying to speak casually.*] Women *will* talk scandal, you know, even where there's no scandal to talk.

HASSELL.

Yes.

DREW.

I'm afraid I shall not be able to provide any further interest or amusement for Miss Lucy Fisher and her friends, as I leave here to-morrow. [HASSELL *looks surprised.*] In fact, I must pack now. I'm sure you'll excuse me. [*He takes* HASSELL'S *hat and gives it to him.*] Good-night.

HASSELL.

I've not nearly done yet. When the rubber was finished, I told Moxon what I had overheard.

DREW.

[*In a rage.*] You—you —— [*Then he controls himself.*] Go on.

HASSELL.

It seems that Miss Mills had already told him that you and his wife were a bit too thick—but he thought nothing of it. But when he heard it a second time—you know he's one of those slow, half-asleep men: it takes a lot to rouse him, but when he *is* roused—by Jove! He'd have made a scene if I hadn't persuaded him to leave the house.

DREW.

Where did you take him?

HASSELL.

Home. He is looking for his wife. [*There is silence during which they look at each other.*] When he gets home he tells the servant to send Mrs. Moxon to him. The servant hunts all over the house and comes to say her mistress can't be found. Miss Mills doesn't know where she is. Nobody knows where she is. Consternation of Moxon. I suggest his wife is here. He

tells me I'm drunk. Now it vexes me to be told I'm drunk, so I don't tell Moxon that from the drawing-room window I had distinctly seen a woman hurrying across the fields toward your studio. No. I decide to keep that to myself—for future use. Moxon thinks his wife is in the garden and goes out to look for her. I say, "All right, I'll look for her, too." Moxon disappears among the shadows of the garden, I come down here. Is she here?

DREW.

No.

[HASSELL *hesitates a moment. Then he glances at the curtains and then at the bookcase.*

HASSELL.

I think I see some cigars there. May I help myself?

DREW.

Yes, do.

[HASSELL *gets up as if to go and help himself but* DREW *anticipates him by moving quickly over to the bookcase and bringing the box of cigars and pushing it toward* HASSELL. HASSELL *nods his head knowingly when* DREW'S *back is turned.*

HASSELL.

[*Taking a cigar and lighting it.*] I suppose you think I'm going to pry.

DREW.

No.

HASSELL.

Now come, be reasonable; I'm pretty well convinced that Moxon's wife is here, but it's nothing to me whether she is or not. I'm not here for Moxon, I'm here for myself. You understand? [*A momentary pause.*] Well, I'll be perfectly frank. I'll admit I'm a scoundrel—a damned ——

DREW.

[*Putting his hand up to prevent* HASSELL'S *saying more.*] Sh!

HASSELL.

[*Quickly and craftily.*] Will she hear us?

DREW.

There is no one to hear us.

HASSELL.

Since when did you become so particular about language?

DREW.

Never mind that. I only want to save you the trouble of telling me what you are. I know well enough.

HASSELL.

Yes—well, as I was saying—I'm pretty well convinced that Moxon's wife is here. I think I may say I'm quite convinced now; so I'll come to the point. I want money—from you.

DREW.

You won't get it.

HASSELL.

We'll see about that. If you write me a check for one thousand pounds, I'll go straight to Moxon and tell him his wife is not here.

DREW.

Don't keep on repeating that preposterous story. You see a woman coming in this direction and you at once fly to the conclusion that she is Mrs. Moxon coming here. Who's going to take *your* word against—[*he is about to point to where she is, then he lowers his arm*] her?

HASSELL.

You think I daren't expose you. You think I'm only using threats to see what I can get out of you. I want to ruin you. I'm tired of seeing you succeed where *I* fail. In the Service

it was always that. *You* went up and up and I went under. And now, again—*I* was after Moxon's wife once, but she turned me down. I failed. But *you* come along, and it's easy. And then you must both go and spoil my chance with Miss Mills. With *her* money I could have saved myself—only *you* stood in my way again—you and your paramour.

[DREW *seizes him and forces him on to the settee.*

DREW.

[*In a rage.*] You beast—you hound! I'll kill you like a dog.

MRS. MOXON.

[*In loud and terrified tones.*] No, no!

[DREW *pauses.* MRS. MOXON *appears.* DREW, *who has turned toward the curtains at the sound of her voice, now walks quickly to the table, opens a drawer and takes out a check book.* HASSELL *watches every movement.*

HASSELL.

That's right. Make it out for a thousand, and I'll go straight to Moxon and say ——

MRS. MOXON.

I forbid.

[MRS. MOXON *expresses the humiliation*

she feels in facing HASSELL *in that place. She walks unsteadily, as if she could scarcely drag one foot after another, but in spite of her physical weakness her resolution is firm.*

DREW.

It's our only way out of it now.

MRS. MOXON.

I forbid. I won't save myself by a lie. It's for me to say, and I forbid.

[DREW, *seeing her inflexible, tears the check up.*

HASSELL.

[*Taking up his hat.*] Very well. You've had your chance. I suppose you've got sense enough to see I shouldn't be likely to be here on a job of this sort unless I was pretty desperate. I'm ruined without that money. [*He goes toward the door.*] But I'll not go under alone.

DREW.

Hassell! [*Following him a few paces.*

HASSELL.

[*He goes out, calling loudly.*] Hullo, Moxon, hullo!

[DREW *and* MRS. MOXON *stand facing each other.*

MOXON.

[*Now a very long way off.*] Hassell!

MRS. MOXON.

He mustn't find me here.

DREW.

Their cries will have roused the cottage; they'll be looking out. This bright moonlight night they'd see you go out of the door.

MRS. MOXON.

You're right.

DREW.

I must make some excuses—I was going away, and you came to bid me good-bye—and then there's your life—your blameless life—lived day by day before him—these ten years. He's suspicious already, and appearances are as bad as they can be.

MRS. MOXON.

Yes, yes.

DREW.

If the worst comes to the worst—if he takes Hassell's word; if he won't believe yours—I shall do all I can—I mean afterward, always, everything a man can do, I'll do. I'll leave the Service——

MRS. MOXON.

[*Putting up her hands to prevent him saying more.*] I mustn't let you go on. What you suggest would be impossible. In case you should think otherwise, I had better make myself quite plain, and tell you that it never could be possible—not for me. If he won't believe me—if he thinks I have done something which would unfit me to go back to him and the boys—it would be the end of my life. Outside my home I am nothing. Even if I saw things differently—if my upbringing, my ideas, my religion were not what they are—I'm too old now, too set in my ways, to make a change. I know you would do everything to help me—and I have never met with such devotion as yours—but, you see, no one *can* help me now; it's between him and me.

[DREW *goes to the window, pulls the blind and looks out, expressing growing mystification as he recounts what he sees.*

DREW.

There's no one in sight. I can't make it out. The moon makes everything so clear, I thought I should have seen him coming. Ah! People moving near the house; three of them—a woman and two men. Now one walks away—that must be Hassell. He's coming across the

garden as if he were going home, and the others are going toward the house. They've gone in and closed the door.

MRS. MOXON.

[*In sudden alarm.*] Shut out! He wouldn't even come to look for me. He closed the door and left me.

DREW.

[*Going to her.*] Not that. It can't be that.

MRS. MOXON.

If he loved me, wouldn't he have come? Could he have helped coming?

DREW.

[*Seizing her hands.*] What have I brought you to?

MRS. MOXON.

[*Resisting him.*] Let me go.

DREW.

I can't let you face him alone.

MRS. MOXON.

I'm beyond your help now.

DREW.

I can't let you go like this. No—listen. I said I'd stand by you, and it's not only because

I owe it to you; it's more than that. [*She moves to go.*] It's from my heart. My heart is yours! My life is yours! All I have is yours if you'll take it. All I have—everything —it's yours! Don't go!

MRS. MOXON.

Don't stop me! Let me go! Don't stop me!

[*She frees her hands from his grasp and hurries out, leaving* DREW *alone in the studio.*

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE.—*The same as the first and second acts. It is the morning after the events in Act III.* MISS MILLS *is arranging flowers in a vase on the table. A tray of cut flowers is beside the vase. She arranges the flowers and occasionally clips a stem as she talks to* DREW, *who enters from the garden.*

DREW.

Good-morning, Miss Mills.

MISS MILLS.

Good-morning.

DREW.

You sent for me.

MISS MILLS.

Yes. I thought of running down to see you, but the world is such a gossip—especially Lucy Fisher; and Mr. White might have been at the window, so to avoid the appearance of anything clandestine ——

DREW.

Yes, yes, but for goodness' sake, tell me why you sent for me.

MISS MILLS.

To tell you it turned out better than you might have expected.

DREW.

[*Very much relieved.*] Thank God!

MISS MILLS.

You evidently know what I mean.

DREW.

[*On his guard.*] No.

MISS MILLS.

Then you won't be at all interested in what I was going to tell you.

DREW.

[*Embarrassed, but trying to appear casual.*] Has Mr. Moxon gone to the Works as usual?

MISS MILLS.

Yes.

DREW.

Ah!

MISS MILLS.

But that's nothing to go by. If the house were on fire George would go to the Works as usual.

DREW.

[*Anxiously, but carefully.*] Isn't everything as usual?

MISS MILLS.

As far as Mr. Moxon knows, it is.

DREW.

[*Relieved.*] Ah!

MISS MILLS.

That's the main thing, isn't it?

DREW.

Yes—is it?

MISS MILLS.

What a to-do there was last night.

DREW.

Was there?

MISS MILLS.

Don't pretend you don't know all about it. [*She looks at him, but he is inscrutable.*] Mr. Moxon would have gone down to see what it was—only ——

DREW.

[*Eagerly.*] Why didn't he?

MISS MILLS.

[*Delighted.*] Then you *are* just a little curious?

DREW.

[*Earnestly.*] Why didn't Moxon go?

MISS MILLS.

Because *I* came to the rescue.

DREW.

You?

MISS MILLS.

The minute they came from the Fishers' and began asking for Martha, I knew where she was.

DREW.

[*Wondering.*] Oh!

MISS MILLS.

Instinct.

DREW.

Really.

MISS MILLS.

[*Importantly.*] Women often *feel* things are happening.

DREW.

Yes, but they—they often feel things are happening when they aren't.

[*He moves away so that his back is to her.*

MISS MILLS.

[*Annoyed.*] Oh! I've a good mind not to tell you now for saying that. Well—not unless you want to hear more than I want to tell. And there must be a tacit understanding between us that Martha was where we both know she was.

DREW.

[*Turning to her.*] How should *I* know where Mrs. Moxon was?

MISS MILLS.

[*Promptly.*] You shouldn't, but you do.

DREW.

No. *I* don't know, and *you* don't know; but if what you have to tell me can be of any service to Mrs. Moxon, I had better hear it.

MISS MILLS.

That's not fair. That's putting me on my honor not to press the point further. I do think I might be let into the secret a little more after I was such a help. [*With resignation as she places a vase of flowers on the mantelshelf.*] But you'd better know what I did. [*She comes*

close to him.] When that odious Hassell went capering down to your place I joined Mr. Moxon in the garden. I soon found out his suspicions. It's easier to get things out of him than out of you. Well, I spent the time telling him everything I could think of against that Hassell. I'd almost convinced him that the creature was untrustworthy when he came capering back with his story about Martha being—*you know where.* Then Mr. Moxon began to waver, so I said, "Can't you see the man is in liquor?" But still he was for going down to look for Martha—so I let out at him. I told him if he took Hassell's word against his wife and went down there to look for her I should tell her and she'd never forgive him. "But what can I do?" he said. "Where must I look for her?" "Anywhere but there," I said. [DREW *smiles gratefully at* MISS MILLS.] That made a man of him. He was nearly dignified when he sent Hassell about his business—and if Mr. Hassell had had a tail it would have hung down. Well, then—then ——

DREW.

Then you and Mr. Moxon went into the house?

MISS MILLS.

What makes you think that?

DREW.

What did you and Moxon do then?

MISS MILLS.

We went into the house. [*Seriously.*] But, of course, there was no Martha—and I could only suggest she was strolling in the lane and had forgotten how late it was. [*Her expression softens.*] After a little while she came home. Poor Martha. She just hastened up-stairs without a word.

DREW.

Didn't they meet?

MISS MILLS.

[*Faltering.*] No—because when I suggested she was strolling in the lane—George got another idea. You know, there's a little grave in the churchyard and he thought she might have gone there—so he went to look. [*She is vexed at having nearly made herself cry.*] It was so silly of him to think of that. He has no perception—none at all. [*She wipes her eyes and tries to cheer herself up.*] As soon as Martha was safe at home, I flew to George with the joyful news. Of course, he was for asking her where she'd been, so quick as thought I said, "No. Don't ask her—because you can't let her know you've been anxious without let-

ting her see you've been suspicious too." So he said nothing about it. [*She smiles.*] Wasn't I a help?

[DREW *smiles at her, nods gratefully, and then sighs.*

DREW.

I wish we hadn't had to spill so many lies.

MISS MILLS.

[*Cheerfully.*] Oh, but there's a difference. If I tell lies to save myself I'm a liar; but if I tell them to save a friend—I'm a gentleman. And now I suppose you'll sail away and the Moxons will go on just as before. Poor Martha! How dreadful it must be to belong to any one.

DREW.

[*Sadly.*] How dreadful it is not to belong to any one.

MISS MILLS.

You, I suppose, are wedded to the sea?

DREW.

Yes, it sounds poetical, but it's damned cold!

MISS MILLS.

But an unmarried naval officer is such a free lance.

DREW.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Yes, until you bump up against one of the big things and see right into the heart of a home. Then, instead of saying, "How humdrum it is," you say, "How beautiful!" All those habits and associations and family affections—what ballast they give. If you've neglected to form ties and take up responsibilities of your own, you've shirked your share in the problems of life. And by and by you don't feel any longer how splendid it is to be free. You feel envious and ashamed and out of it. The joys of the free lance aren't all they are cracked up to be.

MISS MILLS.

I wish you wouldn't talk like that. You make me feel so uncomfortable.

DREW.

[*Surprised.*] You? Why you?

MISS MILLS.

[*Nearly crying.*] I know perfectly well it's all aimed at *me.*

DREW.

My dear Miss Mills.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, I know you mean me. I shouldn't mind you saying it—only—it's so true. I always

meant to marry him some time. I didn't know there was any hurry. *You've* made me feel as if he was my last chance.

DREW.

[*Kindly.*] We never know which is our last chance till we've lost it.

MISS MILLS.

[*Thoughtfully.*] I like Mr. White very much, but I expected to find love more devouring. I ought to be ready to chop off my head for his sake. I never felt that way about any one yet.

DREW.

I don't think most people ever do.

MISS MILLS.

I suppose it would have happened by now if it was going to. [*Slowly and thoughtfully.*] Perhaps I'd better ——

DREW.

Not if you don't love him.

MISS MILLS.

He hasn't said he wants to marry any one else, has he? He has. I can see he has. It's Lucy Fisher. It's no use saying it isn't. If it wasn't, you'd have said so. Lucy Fisher—that fat, freckled-faced thing—my best friend, too! Oh! She'd better not. [*Enter* WHITE

from the garden. He wears flannels. MISS MILLS'S *manner changes as soon as* WHITE *appears; she becomes smiling and gracious.* MISS MILLS, *shaking hands with him.*] Oh! Good-morning, Mr. White. What a pleasant morning. You look as if you were dressed for tennis.

WHITE.

Yes. I'm on my way to the Fishers'.

MISS MILLS.

[*With repressed suspicion and anger; snatching her hand away.*] The Fishers!

WHITE.

[*To* DREW.] I knew I should find *you* here.

DREW.

It's the last time.

[*He goes off by the window.*

WHITE.

He really is going away to-day.

MISS MILLS.

I shall be going away soon, too.

WHITE.

[*In a matter-of-fact tone.*] Oh.

[*He plays with the flowers on the table.*

MISS MILLS.

You won't care.

WHITE.

Yes, I shall.

MISS MILLS.

Oh, no, you won't. Lucy Fisher will be here.

WHITE.

[*In mild surprise.*] What makes you say that?

MISS MILLS.

Nothing. [*Wonderingly.*] But I can't think what you can possibly see in Lucy Fisher.

WHITE.

She's a great friend of yours.

MISS MILLS.

That's how I know there's nothing in her.

WHITE.

What have you got against her?

MISS MILLS.

Nothing; but a girl who wastes her mornings playing tennis ——

WHITE.

What else should she do?

[*He smells the flowers.*

MISS MILLS.

Of course, if she's not domesticated —— *I* must go on doing the flowers.

[*She seizes the scissors in one hand and some flowers in the other and slips their stems.*

WHITE.

Am I in the way? [MISS MILLS *flings the scissors on the tray with a clatter.*] What's the matter?

MISS MILLS.

[*Annoyed, and trying not to cry.*] Nothing. Please don't speak to me.

WHITE.

Have I said the wrong thing?

[MISS MILLS *turns her back on him.* WHITE *looks puzzled at first, then a light slowly breaks over his face. He goes straight up to her and embraces her.*] Izzy!

MISS MILLS.

[*Yielding and falling on his shoulders.*] Ernest!

WHITE.

I knew, if I kept on, you wouldn't be able to resist me.

MISS MILLS.

[*Disengaging herself and laughing.*] Oh! How clever of you.

WHITE.

I don't mean because I'm so nice, but it's the only way if one isn't naturally a winner.

MISS MILLS.

Don't say such dreadful things, dearest. I always meant to marry you. The idea was always at the back of my head. It only needed Lucy Fisher to bring it to the front. And—and other things have happened that have set me thinking a little.

WHITE.

[*Murmuring.*] Izzy! [*Re-enter* DREW.

DREW.

Here's Moxon coming from the Works.

MISS MILLS.

You'll stay and see him?

DREW.

Yes, I'd better—just meet him.

WHITE.

I must go on to the Fishers'.

MISS MILLS.

[*Cheerfully, to* WHITE.] Give my love to Lucy.

WHITE.

Very well—[*hesitates, very much embarrassed*] darling. [*Exit* WHITE.

DREW.

[*Surprised.*] Darling! Oh!

MISS MILLS.

Yes—just now.

DREW.

Then you and I are cousins. [*Going toward her.*] Allow me to ——

MISS MILLS.

[*Thinking he is going to kiss her.*] Not until my wedding day.

DREW.

Not congratulate you?

MISS MILLS.

[*Confused and smiling.*] Oh! Thank you.

DREW.

[*Emotionally taking both her hands and looking in her face.*] I'm so glad—so very glad. He's such a good fellow. I hope you'll both be very happy. [MISS MILLS *smiles back at him, realizing, as he does, his own loneliness. He turns away from her before he says.*] *He* knows nothing about last night?

MISS MILLS.

I haven't told him.

DREW.

And you don't think there's any danger from Hassell?

MISS MILLS.

Oh, no. I'm sure George will never believe anything *he* says now—only you and I know—so she's quite safe. [*Enter* MOXON *with a very serious face.* MISS MILLS, *cheerfully.*] Captain Drew has called to say good-bye to us.

[MOXON *looks at* DREW.

MOXON.

[*To* MISS MILLS.] Has my wife told you we can't ask you to stay any longer?

MISS MILLS.

[*Surprised.*] No.

MOXON.

You can't very well stay here alone with me. Martha leaves home to-day.

[DREW, *at the window, looks round.*

MISS MILLS.

For long ?

MOXON.

Until I decide what is best to be done.

MISS MILLS.

Is anything the matter ?

MOXON.

I know all about last night.

MISS MILLS.

You've seen Mr. Hassell. You surely don't take his word against ours.

MOXON.

No, I don't, but this morning my wife came and told me everything herself.

[DREW *and* MISS MILLS *look at each other in dismay.*

MISS MILLS.

I must go to Martha. Oh, these good women ! Always most dangerous when the danger is all over.

[*Exit* MISS MILLS. DREW *takes up his hat and then stops.*

DREW.

I can't go away without speaking a word.

MOXON.

[*Interrupting him.*] Don't let me hear excuses.

DREW.

I've none to make for myself. But *she's* not the one who ought to suffer. She didn't see where she was drifting. *I* didn't look ahead.

MOXON.

[*Turning to* DREW *resentfully.*] Why couldn't you let us alone? We were very happy. [*He meets* DREW'S *sorrowful and almost reproachful gaze and becomes ashamed.*] I didn't know but what she was happy.

DREW.

I don't suppose you *can* believe in my good faith now. But I'm sure you'll be fair and put the blame in the right place.

MOXON.

[*Doubting* DREW'S *good intentions.*] You don't like to go away feeling you've come between a man and his wife.

DREW.

If I were thinking of myself, would I urge you to forgive her? Last night—down there

—while we waited and listened for your coming—you know in such moments how thoughts fly and fancies crowd—it seemed to me that in spite of all my efforts to save her, we were being forced together. And my heart leaped at the thought.

MOXON.

[*Angrily.*] What!

DREW.

But *her* thoughts were not of *me.* They were all of home. I was nothing to her then. I realized then that her only chance of abiding happiness was here.

MOXON.

I can't forgive her. When I think of all I went through last night. I thought she was grieving for the child—the little girl who died—sometimes she gets so depressed about it. I'd noticed she was strange last evening, and when she was missing last night, I feared she might be wandering—an absence like people get. I thought of the river. I reproached myself so bitterly for having gone out and left her. And all the while she was down there with *you.*

DREW.

It was what she said to me then which changed me—made me see that the only way I

could serve her was to efface myself, to leave her to follow the life she had already taken up and half lived through. The husband of such a woman as your wife need fear no rival. For her there is only one man who ever really enters her life. Others may offer her devotion, but no one else can bring her happiness. Nobody knows that better than she does. Surely the proof is in her confession. After your suspicions were at rest—when she had nothing to fear—she came and told you everything herself.

MOXON.

Haven't I given her everything a man could? Haven't I worked for her and been faithful to her? The least she can do is to be loyal to me. She might have known that I love her.

DREW.

She was starved—starved for a show of love. Women can't take love for granted all the time. There is in every woman such an everlasting need for love—love shown and expressed. It's a need of her nature which must be satisfied.

MOXON.

I've got none of those ways which seem to please women.

DREW.

If she feels your heart is toward her, I don't

think the words and the ways would matter much.

[*Enter* MRS. MOXON *with a basket of keys.*

MRS. MOXON.

I've brought the keys.

[*She stops as she sees* DREW. DREW *looks at* MRS. MOXON. MOXON *is sitting on the ottoman and does not notice* DREW.

DREW.

Mrs. Moxon, my leave is up. Good-bye!

[*He goes quickly off.*

[*In the following scene* MR. *and* MRS. MOXON *are both timid and embarrassed.* MRS. MOXON *crosses to* MOXON *and takes a key from the basket.*

MRS. MOXON.

This is the key of the linen chest—[*she puts it back and produces another*] and this is the key of the ——

MOXON.

[*Interrupting her awkwardly.*] Martha! I begin to see that for years I've not been as kind as I might have been. You didn't think I didn't love you, did you?

MRS. MOXON.

We seem not to have thought of that lately. It's so long since you and I had a real talk.

MOXON.

I can't let you go. I can't. Martha, suppose we go together and see the boys.

MRS. MOXON.

Oh, yes, George—let us go and see the boys.

[*They embrace.*

THE END OF THE PLAY

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